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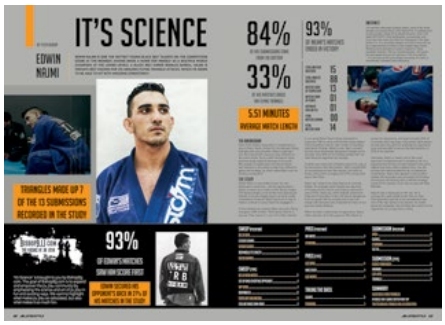

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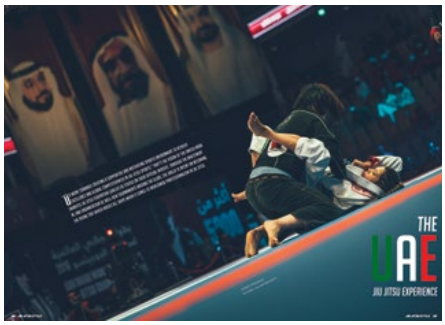

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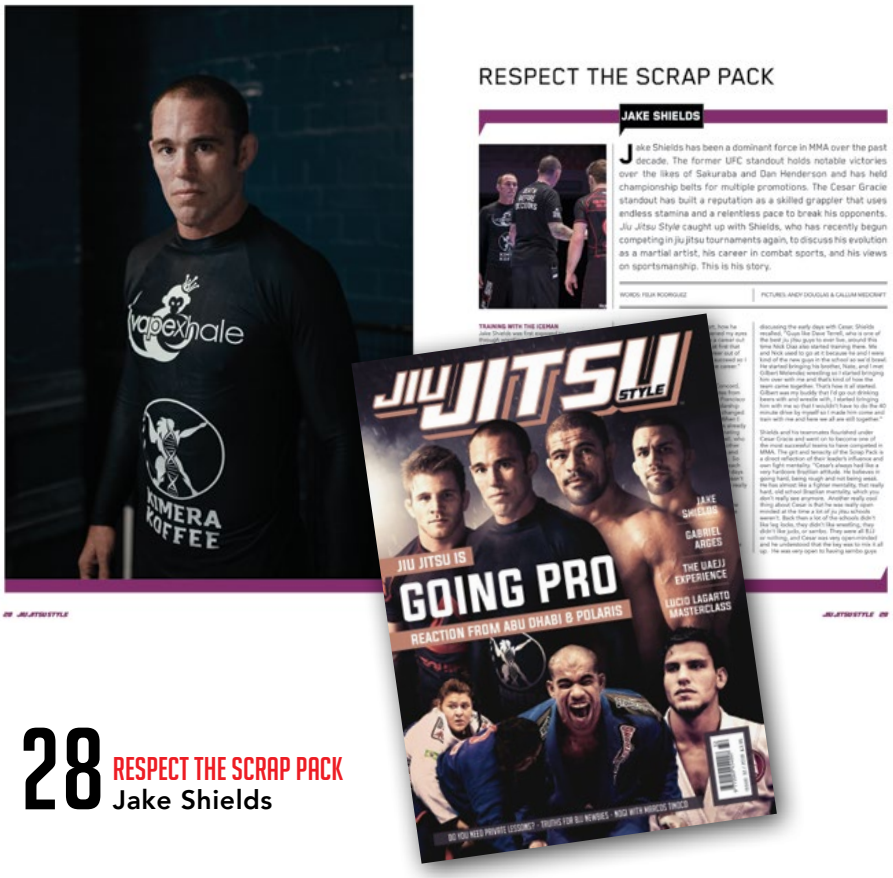

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Jake Shields

JIU JITSU STYLE

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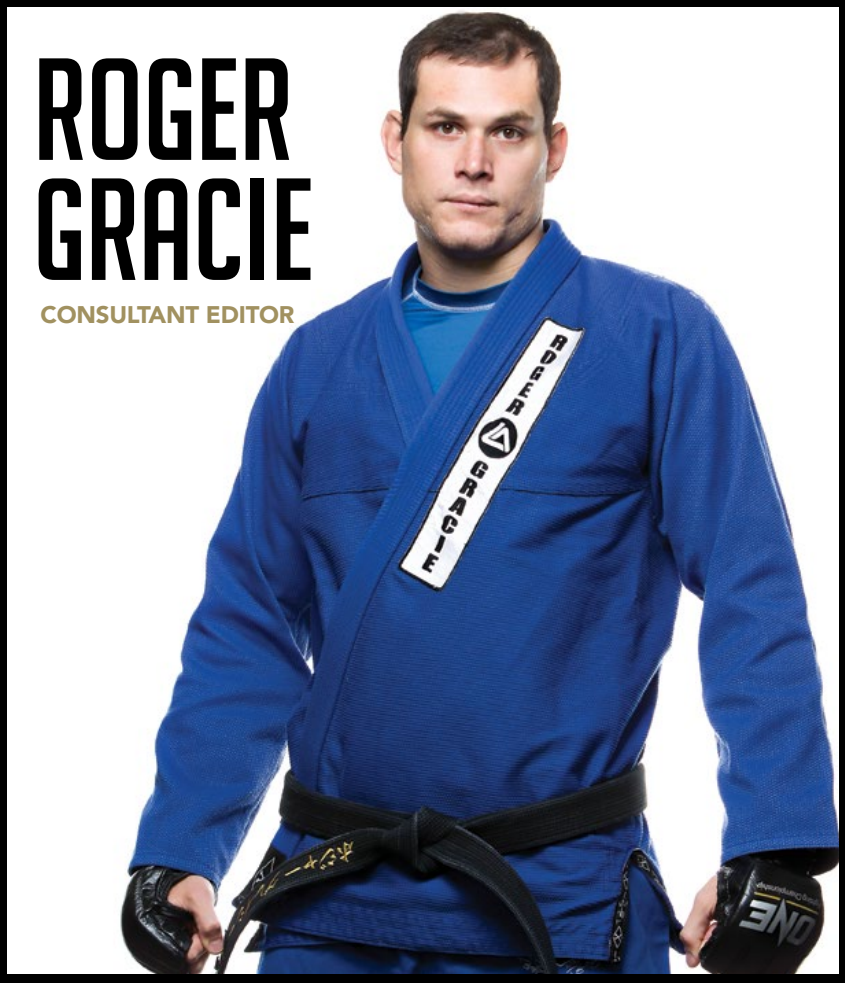
ROGER GRACIE

CONSULTANT EDITOR



"AS A GRACIE, WHENEVER YOU COMPETE YOU HAVE TO HANDLE NOT ONLY ALL THE EMOTIONS THAT COME WITH FIGHTING, BUT ALSO THE ADDED EXPECTATION TO PERFORM"

At the time of writing this column I'm around 35,000ft in the air, probably flying somewhere over Russia, on the way back from my ONE FC light heavyweight title fight. I am so happy to be bringing the championship belt back home to London – and it was pretty funny trying to get it through airport security!

I really want to dedicate this last win to my family. As a Gracie, whenever you compete you have to handle not only all the emotions that come with fighting, but also the added expectation to perform. Though it brings extra pressure, my family has been doing this for generations and I am proud to always do my best and represent the Gracie name.

I was extremely confident going into this fight, as my preparation was probably the best it had ever been and I'd been training extremely hard. Nothing comes easy, and I've been working on my boxing for a long time in order to broaden my skills for mixed martial arts. I guess it was destined for me to win by submission when I've been working so hard on my standup!

Now I have a ONE FC title, I am very focused on continuing to compete and develop my skills as a mixed martial artist. I know there are still plenty of areas for me to develop and improve, but I am still hungry to keep pushing forward. I am also very excited to get back to jiu jitsu competition very soon, so it's going to be a busy second half of the year for me!

Inside this issue, we focus on some of the biggest competitions that have taken place recently and how they're pushing the boundaries of "professional" jiu jitsu. There are so many more events popping up now for athletes to attend, with many offering prize incentives, so it's a very exciting time for jiu jitsu as a whole.

Make sure you check out our Masterclass tutorial feature with Lucio Lagarto. Lagarto is someone that I've trained with since I was a kid and he's known for his guard game, so you're sure to pick up some great tips in this article.

As always, my black belt, Nick Brooks, has some cool techniques for you, this time focusing in on back attacks. He's included some interesting options here, so it's well worth checking out.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

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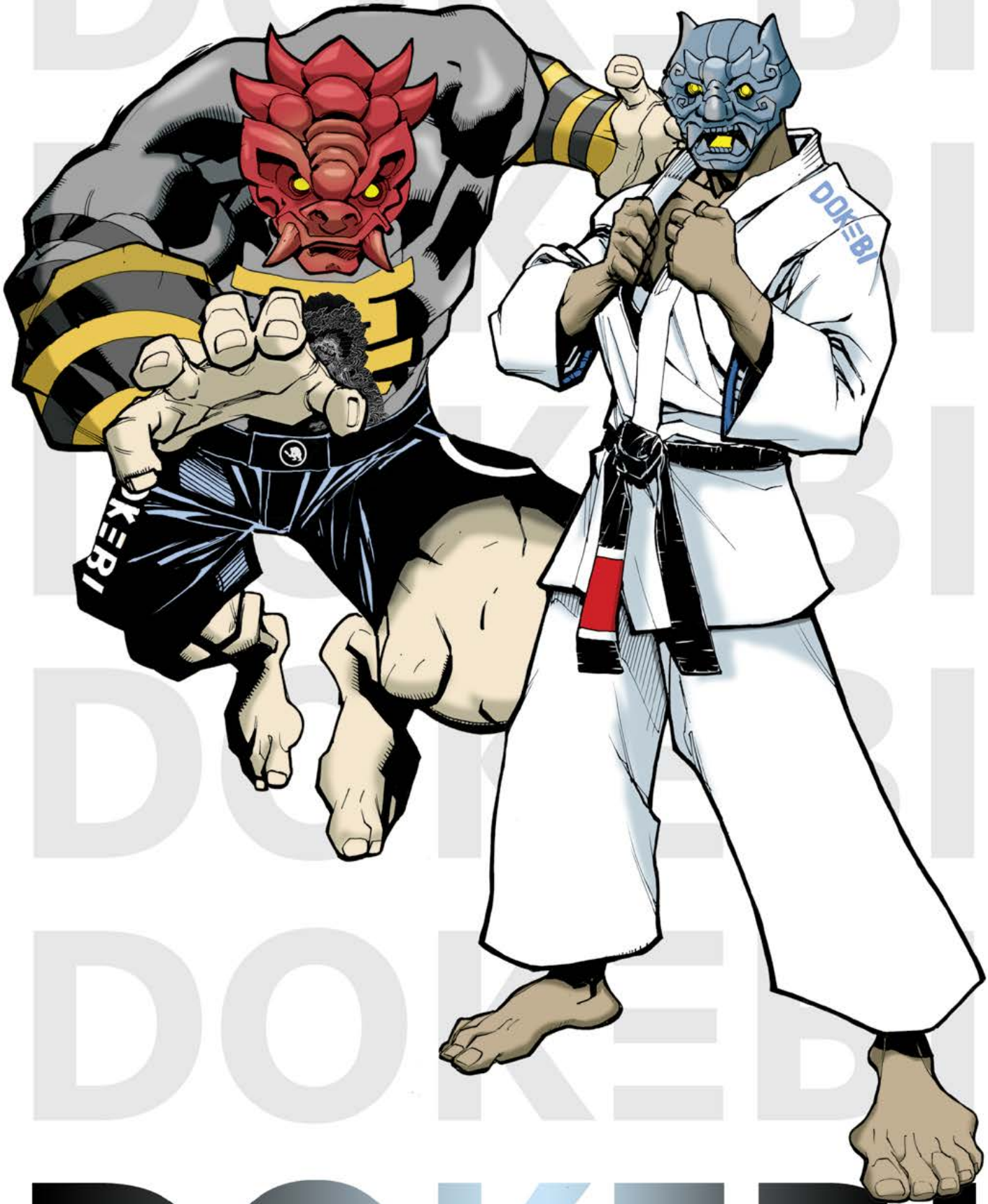

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THE BIG PICTURE

A group shot of the Renzo Gracie Team after Eddie Cummings and Garry Tonon's matches at Polaris Pro 3.

PICTURE: ANDY DOUGLAS

CLASSIC MATCH

ROYCE GRACIE PICKED UP A $64,000 PRIZE FOR WINNING THE UFC 4 EIGHT-MAN TOURNAMENT

ROYCE GRACIE VS DAN SEVERN

Royce came into UFC 4 keen to re-establish his dominant reputation. In the previous event, he had been forced to pull out after a gruelling win over the powerfully built Kimo Leopoldo, technically meaning he lost his next scheduled match with Harold Howard. In the fourth event, he was not even the top seed: that honour went to the now largely forgotten UFC 3 champ, Steve Jennum. Dan Severn also had something to prove. Until UFC 4, the Ultimate Fighting Championship had not featured a wrestler. Upon filling in his application form, Severn was surprised to discover that there was no 'wrestling' option under style: he had to tick 'other'. He told MMAFighting.com that "I saw Royce Gracie winning it as a grappler, and thought if I applied what I knew, I could use my skills to do well in this." Severn was an appropriate first representative for wrestling, with several decades of experience competing all over the world. Although he was not at the level of future UFC wrestlers – such as Olympic gold medallists Mark Schultz (1984 Olympic champion), Kevin Jackson (1992) and more recently Henry Cejudo (2008) – Severn's record was nevertheless respectable.

Severn easily beat Anthony Macias, literally flinging him around the Octagon, before finishing with a sluggish choke. His next fight against alternate Marcus Bosset was even quicker, again ending with a choke. Royce had an easy opening round with the 51 year old 'Black Dragon' Ron Van Clief, then a tougher test against competent striker Keith Hackney. The stage was set for two experienced grapplers to meet in the final. Both were well versed in their respective disciplines, but Severn's huge size advantage – he outweighed Royce by around 36kg – meant that he appeared to have the upper hand.

"THE MAIN PERSON I WAS LOOKING AT DURING THE MATCH WAS MY FATHER, HELIO. EVERY TIME I LOOKED AT HIM, HE WAS CALM AND WOULD JUST SHAKE HIS HEAD, SIGNALLING ME TO SLOW DOWN, STAY CALM AND NOT LOSE ANY ENERGY" - ROYCE GRACIE

THE UFC 4 TV BROADCAST CUT OUT ONE MINUTE BEFORE THE END OF ROYCE AND DAN'S FIGHT

WORDS: CAN SÖNMEZ ILLUSTRATIONS: GARTISTA

THE MATCH

The two men spend forty seconds feeling each other out on the feet, then Severn shoots in for a successful takedown. Royce shifts to closed guard, while Severn simply latches onto his head. It is clear he has little idea of what to do from here, so sticks with what he knows: how to keep an opponent on their back. They stay there for four minutes, until Severn briefly stands up, but is immediately pulled back down. There is a brief flurry of punches a minute and a half later, then again the two men are back in a tight closed guard. Ten minutes into the fight, Royce tries for a triangle. Severn responds by driving him hard against the fence, stacking him right up onto his head. Royce lets goes, Severn tries to stand, then flops back into Royce's butterfly guard. Severn has been throwing the occasional punch at Royce's head, without much effect. At fifteen minutes, Royce locks in a much tighter triangle. Forty seconds later, it is all over.

MATCH LENGTH: 16 MINS
LOCATION: TULSA, OKLAHOMA
DATE: DECEMBER 16TH 1994
EVENT: UFC 4
VENUE: EXPO SQUARE PAVILION
ATTENDANCE: 5,847

"I'M STARING RIGHT THROUGH HIS SOUL AND HE'S LOOKING OVER AT HIS DAD OUTSIDE THE CAGE WALL THERE, AND I COULD READ EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING THROUGH HIS MIND. HE'S SAYING 'DAD I'M HANGING IN HERE, BUT IF YOU WERE TO THROW IN THAT TOWEL I WOULDN'T HOLD IT AGAINST YOU'"
- DAN SEVERN

AFTERMATH

Severn was a challenging test for Royce, due to his combination of wrestling skill and sheer size, but Severn did not possess one very important quality: a willingness to punch. A wrestling match stops once you've gained control of your opponent and pinned their shoulders to the mat. Severn got to that point without any difficulty. Yet having crushed Royce against the fence, he was not able to take the next step and pound him into submission (a strategy younger wrestlers like Mark Kerr would implement to devastating effect a few years later). Instead, after almost sixteen minutes had elapsed, Severn was tapping to a triangle choke. In No Holds Barred, Severn mused to Clyde Gentry, "Did I tap because Royce Gracie beat me or did I tap because I was unwilling to hurt another individual that night?" As Gentry put it, Severn "felt it was his mind that had lost the fight; his body could have finished it."

In 2014, Severn implied on Submission Radio that Royce was feeling the pressure more than viewers realised:

"I'm staring right through his soul and he's looking over at his Dad outside the cage wall there, and I could read exactly what's going through his mind. He's saying 'Dad I'm hanging in here, but if you were to throw in that towel I wouldn't hold it against you', and then I went from Royce's eyes, I looked over to Helio outside the cage wall, Helio is looking at me, he's got the towel in his hands, he brings the towel up, crosses his arms and then just shakes his head 'no'."

Royce had a regular column in Black Belt Magazine as a result of his UFC success: he gave his reaction to UFC 4 in the April 1995 issue. The UFC 4 champion wrote that Severn "was trying to hug me and smother me, but I'm used to playing that kind of game with my students, so that didn't bother me at all. […] He wasn't even choking me: it was more like a head lock. That's not going to make me give up: I'm used to being in that position." Royce then gave a very different interpretation of the interaction with his corner, almost the exact opposite to Severn's claim nearly twenty years later:

"The main person I was looking at during the match was my father, Helio. Every time I looked at him, he was calm and would just shake his head, signalling me to slow down, stay calm and not lose any energy. A couple of times I looked at him and I shook my head as if to ask 'How am I doing? Am I doing OK for you dad?' And he put his thumb up."

From a business perspective, UFC 4 was a disaster, as the broadcast cut out a minute before the end of the fight. Refunds meant that what should have been a barnstorming success was a financial flop. Royce went on to draw with Ken Shamrock in a plodding 'superfight' at UFC 5, rather than entering the tournament. Severn was the champion at UFC 5, going on to an incredibly long-lived MMA career: to date, he has 101 wins, 19 losses and 7 draws, last fighting in 2012.

SOURCES: GENTRY, CLYDE, *NO HOLDS BARRED* • *BLACK BELT MAGAZINE* • MMAFIGHTING.COM • SHERDOG.COM • SUBMISSIONRADIO.COM • SLIDEYFOOT.COM

POSITION STUDY

SPIDER GUARD

THE SPIDER GUARD, IN PORTUGUESE: *GUARDA ARANHA*, IS A POSITION THAT ORIGINATED FROM THE SPORT ASPECT OF JIU JITSU IN THE LATE 1980S. THE SPIDER GUARD HAS MANY VARIATIONS, BUT ITS MOST COMMON USE IS WHEN THE GUARD PLAYER HOLDS BOTH OF THEIR OPPONENT'S SLEEVES, WHILE PLACING EACH OF HIS FEET ON THEIR BICEPS. THIS ALLOWS THE GUARD PLAYER MORE RANGE OF MOVEMENT ON THEIR HIPS, WHICH COINCIDENTALLY STOPS THE GUARD PASSER FROM APPLYING PRESSURE OR CONTROLLING THEIR HEAD.

The spider guard is specific to the sporting aspect of BJJ, with the use of the gi (kimono) and demands great grip and leg strength as well as good flexibility from the guard player.

WORDS: ANDRE BORGES, EDITOR AT WWW.BJJHEROES.COM

THE HISTORY OF THE SPIDER GUARD

The position started out as a defensive option, especially when fighting bigger opponents. Vinicius 'Draculino reported to *Gracie Mag* of first seeing Renzo Gracie 'playing' with this position at the Gracie Barra Academy in Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, back in 1987.

Mauricio 'Tinguinha', regarded as one of the great developers of the Spider Guard, told *BJJ Heroes*: "I don't know who was the first to do the transition [from open guard to spider], but I imagine that it was a natural process that probably occurred in several different gyms at the same time."

Tinguinha mentions that he found it to be a perfect solution against the bigger guys at his gym, as he was the younger and smaller student in the class and found himself on his back regularly. As a teenager, he believed he was the only person using the position until he saw Roberto Traven at a BJJ competition doing exactly the same.

Tinguinha continues: "At the start the spider guard was used mostly as a defensive position, and many critiqued it, labelling it the 'stalling guard'. But the more I used it, the more there was a need to improve it to win fights, to use it for sweeps and later for submissions."

Although the spider guard reigned supreme as the king of the open guards in sport jiu jitsu for many years, Tinguinha continues: "I don't see many people doing the guard right. I believe that most don't have the right system of teaching this stuff, because it is not a guard that you can just teach a couple of positions, you need to teach it as a system, and most people don't have the know-how."

ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA

Notable Spider Guard Competitors: **Maurício 'Tinguinha', Ricardo Vieira, Romulo Barral, Michael Langhi, Ana Laura Cordeiro, Leandro Lo, JT Torres, Rubens Charles 'Cobrinha'.**

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BELT PROMOTIONS

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Tyrone Pendon was promoted to purple belt by Robert Drysdale.

Scott Flashbridge received his blue belt from Ricky Gillon at Gracie Barra Glasgow.

Larry Long received his purple belt from Marcelo Cohen at World Triumph Martial Arts in Tallahassee, Florida.

Shawn Rogers received his blue belt under Rusty Jenkins and Samuel Braga.

Nick Brango was promoted to brown belt under professor Shane Mock.

Mark Badham received his purple belt from David Webb.

Mark Ellis received his blue belt from Aaron Naisbet at The Dungeon MMA.

Eduardo Goncalves promoted the following students from NG Ipswich/Dynamo FightSports: Glenn Ward – brown, Kevin Layne - brown, Ashley Minter – blue, Aimee Fairburn – blue, Steve Hovendan – blue, Tom Ainsley – blue.

Chris Pritchard was promoted to blue belt under Adam Adshead at Factory BJJ.

Keith Zumar was promoted to purple belt under Pat Watterson at Two Swords Jiu Jitsu in Newport, Rhode Island.

Raúl Sánchez was promoted to blue belt under Alberto Cisneros at Gracie Jiu Jitsu San Salvador.

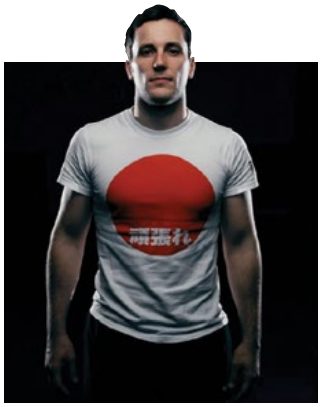
Ahmed Had was promoted to a blue belt by Kevin Taylor, Peter Martell and Jonathan Gale at Titans MMA Academy in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Wayne Lee was promoted to blue belt by Lucio Sergio dos Santos at Lucio Sergio BJJ Southport.

Dan Taylor received his purple belt from James Smart and Ryron Gracie in Cape Town, South Africa.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

THE NEXT GENERATION



It really has been an electrifying few months of jiu jitsu. It seems that every year the competition calendar becomes busier, events become more professional and – most of all – more talented athletes burst onto the black belt scene.

I guess the IBJJF European championships in January was a sign of things to come. It was New School Brotherhood representative Yago De Souza who turned heads in Lisbon, thanks to some dominant performances at middleweight. De Souza made short work of some very seasoned competitors, which was no mean feat for a man who'd barely had his black belt for more than a few months.

The Abu Dhabi World Pro set the stage for another rising star to make their name, and Gabriel Arges duly obliged. Much like De Souza in Lisbon earlier this year, Arges was by no means a favourite, but he ended up going home with a major title to his name - and he only got his black belt in November of last year!

This phenomenon is not exclusive to the men's divisions either. In fact, if you look at the Abu Dhabi World Pro women's division, brown belt athletes defeated no fewer than four former IBJJF black belt world champions in the mixed bracket. We saw Mackenzie Dern narrowly make her final after her brown belt opponent picked up a late penalty, and Alliance's Tayane Porfirio (again, still a brown belt) pretty much smashed everyone on her way to openweight gold. Throw in dominant performances from youngsters Erberth Santos and Felipe Pena and you get the picture I'm trying to paint.

Oh yeah, and who can forget Gordon Ryan and his decimation of all-comers at EBI 6? I mean, come on, Ryan wasn't even supposed to be fighting on that card, yet the 20 year-old alternate rocked-up and took home the title. I believe this is just the beginning, and we can expect new waves of athletes popping up constantly over the coming months and years. Jiu jitsu has been growing so rapidly all over the world in recent times, so I guess it's no surprise that the teenagers of a few years back are now ready to push the stalwart champions for the top accolades. It's going to be interesting to see how it all pans out, and really exciting to watch the champions of the future cut their teeth.

In other news, I have to reserve a little mention here for our Consultant Editor, Roger Gracie, on becoming the ONE FC light heavyweight champion. I train at Roger's academy in London, and I can honestly say that I'd never seen him more dedicated and focused than in the build up to this fight.

If I were being honest, I'd be lying if I didn't look at Roger's MMA career with mixed feelings. He's already achieved more than most could ever hope for in the cage, but I have no doubt that if he'd opted to devote his time to this path earlier (like Ronaldo Jacare for example) he'd probably be pursuing a belt inside the UFC now. On the other hand, I'm so glad he didn't choose that path, as we would have been robbed of watching him make jiu jitsu history as a 10 time world champion and cementing his status as one of the greats.

Either way, it's awesome to see him achieve success in ONE FC, which is a top promotion, and there's a date looming with Marcus Buchecha in the near future for us to look forward to. It's a great time for jiu jitsu fans!

Callum

CALLUM MEDCRAFT

Shoyoroll
The Future Era

IT'S SCIENCE

BY TYLER BISHOP

EDWIN NAJMI

EDWIN NAJMI IS ONE THE HOTTEST YOUNG BLACK BELT TALENTS ON THE COMPETITION SCENE AT THE MOMENT, HAVING MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF AS A MULTIPLE WORLD CHAMPION AT THE LOWER LEVELS. A BLACK BELT UNDER ROMULO BARRAL, NAJMI IS PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS AMAZING FLYING TRIANGLE ATTACKS, WHICH HE SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO HIT WITH AMAZING CONSISTENCY.

TRIANGLES MADE UP 7 OF THE 13 SUBMISSIONS RECORDED IN THE STUDY

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THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

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93%

OF EDWIN'S MATCHES SAW HIM SCORE FIRST

EDWIN SECURED HIS OPPONENT'S BACK IN 27% OF HIS MATCHES IN THE STUDY

84%

OF HIS SUBMISSIONS CAME FROM THE BOTTOM

33%

OF HIS MATCHES ENDED VIA FLYING TRIANGLE

5.51 MINUTES

AVERAGE MATCH LENGTH

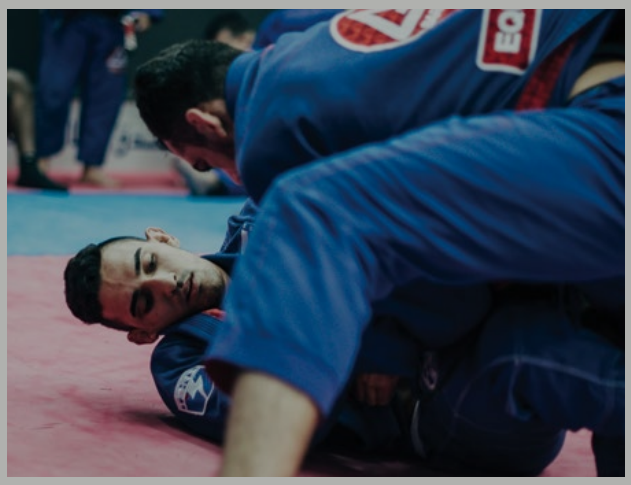
93%

OF NAJMI'S MATCHES ENDED IN VICTORY

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Edwin Najmi, used in this small sample occurred at IBJJF, UAE World Pro, or professional jiu jitsu events, inside of his weight division, and in the years 2013-2015. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches. This is a limited sample – but given the estimated amount of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

TOTAL MATCHES OBSERVED	15
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	88
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	13
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	01
OPPONENT WON MATCH	01
TOTAL MATCHES DRAWN	00
TOTAL MATCHES WON	14



THE BREAKDOWN

One of the fastest rising stars in competition jiu jitsu is Edwin Najmi. Known for his dramatic flying triangles and quick finishes, Edwin is perhaps one the most prolific young jiu jitsu athletes on the scene today. He is a stark contrast to many previous study subjects because of his youth. We actually included some of Edwin's brown belt matches in this study to help fully define his game and strategy. So what makes Najmi such an exciting competitor?

THE STUDY

Edwin Najmi is very widely known for one technique in particular – and for good reason; Najmi is known as a master of the flying triangle. The flying triangle is one of the most spectacular finishes in jiu jitsu largely due to its rarity inside competition; however Najmi has found a way to make it a threat in every match he engages in.

In the matches we viewed, Najmi secured a flying triangle in 33% of them. Think about that for a second. That means in 1 out of 3 of the matches in our study Edwin Najmi flying triangled his opponent. We've never had another study subject come anywhere close to that number of standing submission finishes. What's more, Najmi actually has the most statistically dangerous triangle we've studied. Over 46% of his matches ended with him submitting his opponent by triangle.

Another very clear part of Najmi's style of jiu jitsu is his dominance from the bottom. Najmi scored 84% of his submissions from the bottom with 63% of those coming from triangles and 27% coming from leg or foot locks.

Najmi can certainly be described as an exciting fighter. His average match length was less than 6 minutes and he had an astounding submission rate of 87%; that's one of the highest submission rates we've recorded. In fact, he was so dangerous from his guard that he actually had a very low sweep rate and pass rate compared to many of our previous study subjects.

When he wasn't submitting his opponents, Najmi often used the de la Riva guard or Berimbolo to sweep his opponents, and approximately 83% of his passes were leg drag or leg weave style passes. He was also very good in attacking his opponents back and was able to secure the back position in 27% of his matches.

Ultimately, Najmi is clearly one of the most dominant competitors we've studied so far. It is arguable that he has not been tested to the same degree that many other subjects have, but the success he's demonstrated so far is impressive nonetheless. Najmi also appears to be another athlete who has been very successful minimising techniques and sticking with a defined strategy inside of his matches; much like we see with Rafa Mendes.

Najmi's star is obviously on the rise. He is coming off a gold medal at the Pan Jiu Jitsu Championship and has to be considered to be one of the top names in his division no matter where he competes. He will likely be a terror for his opposition for a long time to come.

SWEEP (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA	2
CLOSED GUARD	2
SPIDER GUARD	1
BERIMBOLO TO SWEEP	3
50/50 GUARD	1

SWEEP (TYPE)

DE LA RIVA-BASED	2
SIT UP AND OVERTAKE OPPONENT	1
HIP OVER	1
BERIMBOLO	3
TRIPS/OFF BALANCING	1
COLLAR DRAG/ARM DRAG	1

PASS (POSITION)

ON KNEES	1
STANDING	5

PASS (TYPE)

LEG DRAG	4
KNEE OVER	1
LEG WEAVE	1

TAKING THE BACK

GUARD	3
STANDING	1

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

BACK	2
GUARD	3
STANDING	7
50/50	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

CHOKE FROM BACK	2
ARMBAR	1
LEG LOCK	3
TRIANGLE	7

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: FLYING TRIANGLES

AVOIDED: HALF GUARD BOTTOM AND TOP

TOP TECHNIQUES: TRIANGLE AND LEG DRAG PASS

HISTORY 101:
LOVATO JIU JITSU

When you hear the name Rafael Lovato Jr, you might think he is yet another top competitor from Brazil. Or at least, you might think that if you were new to BJJ. Anybody who has been in the sport for a while will be well aware that Lovato Jr is in fact from the USA. Not only that, he is among the best BJJ competitors to emerge from the United States, one of a very small group who can boast of a gold medal at the Mundials.

BJ Penn was the first American to claim black belt gold at the World Championships: Lovato Jr was the second. He was born on the 25th June 1983 in Cincinnati, Ohio, to a family already immersed in the martial arts. Lovato Sr moved his family to Oklahoma City while his son was only eight years old. It's a city to which Lovato Jr has stayed loyal, preferring to grow jiu jitsu in his home state rather than moving to the sunnier climes of BJJ hotspots like California.

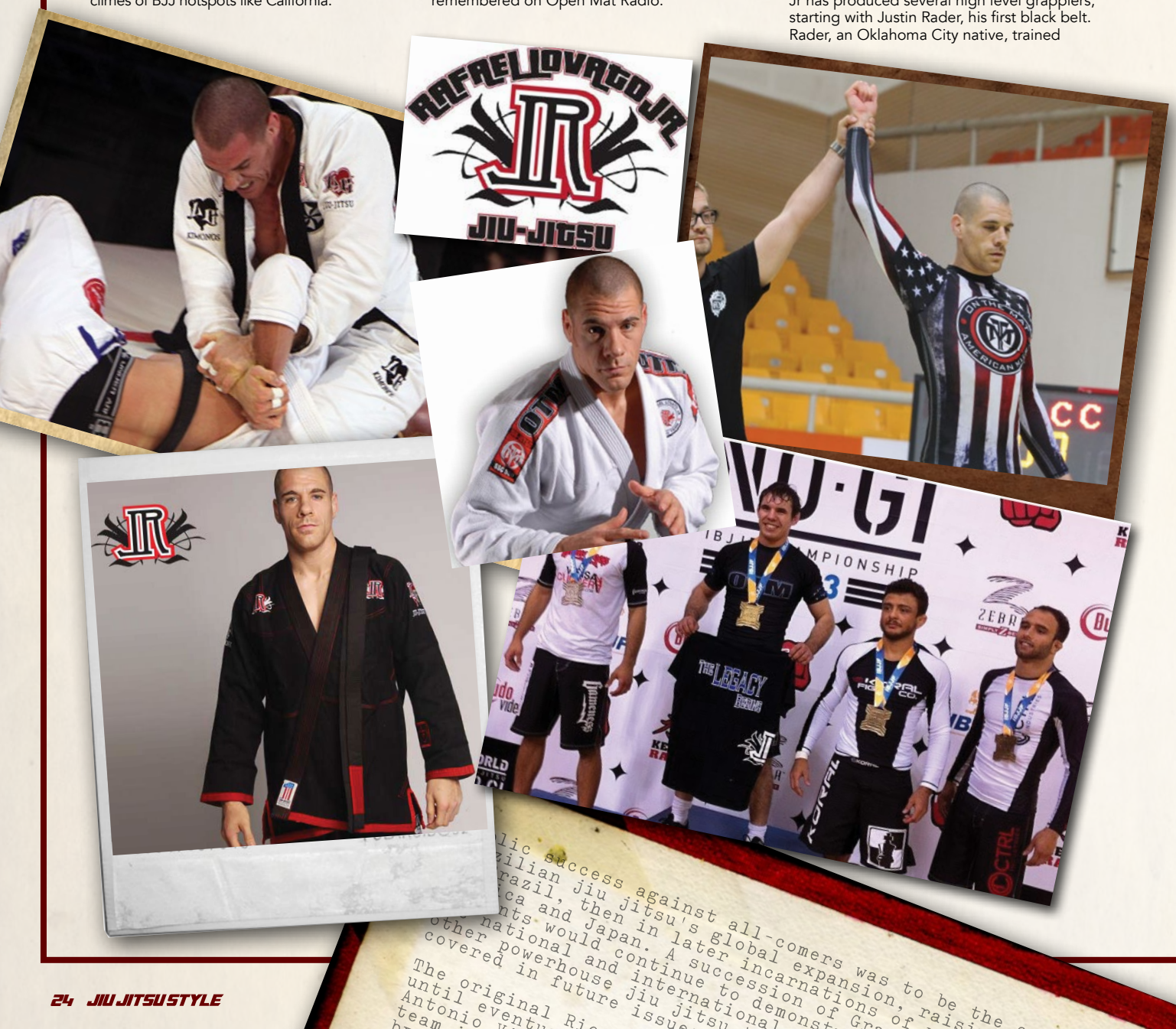
The importance of Jeet Kune Do is a recurring theme when looking at BJJ's history in the USA. Lovato Sr is another example, having heard about Brazilian jiu jitsu at a JKD instructor's conference. After Lovato Jr was introduced to the sport, it would not be long before he was earning plaudits at competition. As a sixteen year old, Lovato Jr won the 2000 Pan Ams in the Juvenile blue belt division.

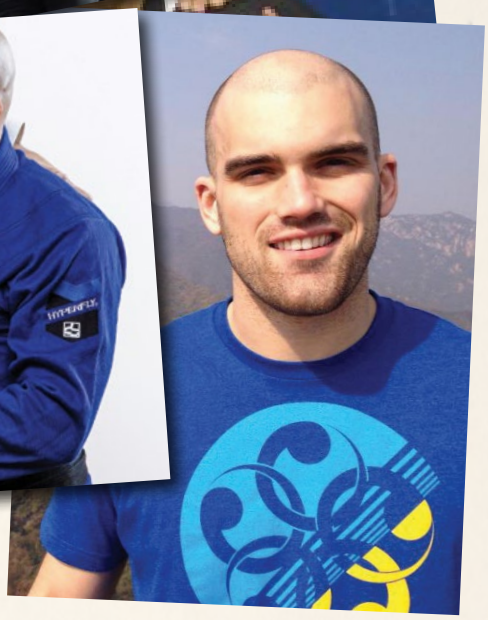
He brought that prowess to Brazil, racking up wins over Augusto 'Tanquinho' Mendes, Vinny Magalhaes and Ricardo 'Demente' Abreu (a rivalry that continues to this day, as Lovato Jr beat him again a few months ago at the Fight 2 Win Pro 3 event). The turn of the millennium brought his first medals at the Mundials too, earning a silver and a bronze in the Absolute and Ultra Heavy Juvenile divisions. His success in 2000 had a lasting impact, as he remembered on Open Mat Radio:

"Coming from Oklahoma, without a black belt instructor, I was just training on my own with my father and learning what we could, watching videos and all that. To go to Brazil and win, against kids who had been doing it a much longer time with better access to training and instruction, it showed me I could become a black belt world champion one day. Being there and seeing the black belts win, watching the high level guys, inspired me. I saw BJ win that same year, so I told myself, 'I'm going to be the next one to do that for America.' "

Lovato Sr was the first to earn his black belt, in 2003. That same year, Lovato Jr reached a major turning point at the Arnold Invitational. While still a brown belt, he faced the legendary Saulo Ribeiro in the final: impressed by his performance, Ribeiro invited the younger man to come and train with him. In 2004, Lovato Jr received his black belt from Carlos Machado, shortly after turning 21. The following year, he committed to the Ribeiro team. Judging by his results, it was an excellent choice. In 2007, Lovato Jr made history by winning gold at the Mundials. He has kept making history over the years, such as when he became the first non-Brazilian to win the notoriously tough Absolute division at the Brasileiros.

Lovato's commitment to his father's school – simply named Lovato's School of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and MMA - has paid off too. Lovato Jr has produced several high level grapplers, starting with Justin Rader, his first black belt. Rader, an Oklahoma City native, trained





martial arts from a young age. By five years old, he was already practising both taekwondo and wrestling, which several years down the line would lead to BJJ. While the parents of the young wrestlers were talking, one of them suggested to Rader's father that he try out Lovato's Academy, having seen the sign advertising jiu jitsu.

A 12 year old Justin Rader was duly signed up. In the same year that Lovato Jr won his greatest accolade, Justin Rader was also winning gold at the Mundials, in the purple belt division. He would get a bronze as a brown belt in 2008, later placing at the ADCC as a black belt. In 2010, both Rader and his instructor won gold at the IBJJF No Gi Worlds. While most of Lovato Jr's other big name students have been in his weight division, featherweight Rader proves Lovato Jr's ability to develop smaller grapplers at the highest level too.

James Puopolo began his training at Lovato's school in January 2005. At that time, Brazilian jiu jitsu was still a niche sport, yet to get the huge boost that came from mixed martial arts' move into the mainstream later that year, thanks to *The Ultimate Fighter.* Puopolo had initially intended to try boxing, but fortunately for BJJ, his father encouraged him to put on a gi instead, after watching the UFC. Puopolo spent several years teaching maths at a high school, still somehow managing to squeeze in enough training to win the Mundials as a purple belt in 2009 and a bronze at brown belt in 2010. Several years later, after switching to focus full time on BJJ, Puopolo also clinched gold at the 2013 No Gi Worlds. He currently heads up his own school, Salem-Keizer BJJ Academy, part of the growing Lovato Jiu Jitsu affiliate network.

Another Lovato student, Jared Dopp, impressively managed to finish 4th at the ADCC in 2013 while still a purple belt. He went on to earn a silver medal two years later as a brown. In contrast to Puopolo, Dopp has stated he prefers training part-time. He told AttackTheBack.com that "I did go full-time in 2013 and didn't enjoy it. Jiu-jitsu became a job and it doesn't pay purple belts very well! […] I actually needed school in order to challenge my mind. I started chemical engineering at the University of Oklahoma in January 2014 and I started to enjoy training a lot more."

Rafael Lovato Jr continues to be a presence on the competition scene himself, having also tried his hand at MMA. He currently holds a 2-0 record, both wins in the Legacy Fighting Championship. At 32 years old, it may be difficult to make a run at the highest echelons of a new sport, but with his track record for beating expectations, you can never count out Lovato Jr.

TIMELINE

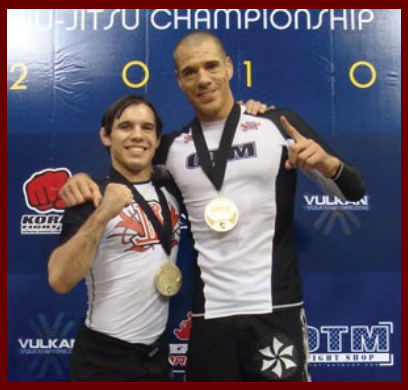
2000
In the same year BJ Penn won at black belt, Lovato Jr clinched two medals in the juvenile division

2003
Lovato Sr earns his black belt

2004
Carlos Machado promotes Lovato Jr to black belt

2007
Lovato Jr becomes the second American to win gold at the Mundials

2010
Justin Rader and his instructor Lovato Jr both win gold at the IBJJF No Gi Worlds



2013
Lovato Jr becomes the first non-Brazilian to win the Brasileiros black belt Absolute

2015
Lovato Jr extends his MMA record to 2-0 at the Legacy Fighting Championships

SOURCES: • OPENMATRADIO.COM • ATTACKTHEBACK.COM • BJJHEROES.COM • LOVATOJR.COM • OKBJJ.COM • GRACIEMAG • SKBJJ.COM

WORDS: TOM BELL
PICTURES: ANDY DOUGLAS & CALLUM MEDCRAFT

ERIN HERLE: SUBMITTING THE STIGMA

Competitor, promoter, journalist, brown belt, campaign leader – Erin Herle's list of talents goes on and on.

From starting her own zine, to training under a cocktail of instructors some would give a blank cheque to learn from, she has a new project 'Submit the Stigma' inspired by previously unspoken difficulties and family tragedies.

Hey Erin, tell us about the time you first put on a white belt. How did you even discover jiu jitsu?
I used to go to these hardcore shows and browse a hardcore music forum online. There was a guy on the forum selling cupcakes in Maryland to raise money to get to the Pan Ams, which were held where I lived. I said I had no idea what he was actually doing, but offered to hang out. He wanted to watch his team mates after he competed, so I went along and I got to see what it was all about. I watched a female match and thought it was so cool at a time that I had no self-esteem, no goals and no idea what I wanted to do in college.

Anyway, I was on medication at the time for acne and wouldn't even join a gym until my face was clear of spots. I couldn't do anything without makeup and even though I knew people at the gym it took me over a year to go there. I then learned who Romulo Barral was and he happened to be the instructor at that gym – I had no idea what his accomplishments meant, but someone said he was like the Michael Jordan of jiu jitsu. I started to pay a lot more attention to what he had to say both inside and outside of class.

So you spent a lot of time with Romulo, whose achievements speak for themselves, but then you moved to Cobrinha's! Was one of the world's best not enough?
So at the time I was with Romulo his team was kind of in transition. We were at Legacy MMA and he was going to open Gracie Barra North Ridge. We couldn't train that much, it was a small team that was loyal wherever he went. There had been some drama in the team and it's funny, the guy who I thought was the biggest punk, I'm talking about Edwin Najmi, has gone on to become one of the nicest people I've ever met.

It was really hard. There weren't many girls to train with, no people my age apart from Edwin, who I used to fight with like a sibling and we gave each other a tough time. There was nobody else really my rank or size. Cobrinha had moved just 26 miles away, so I was turned-on to the idea of going there because he had girls and I was seeing a guy who told me Cobrinha made him a world champion and I made the switch after a really hard decision.

Your ambitions lay just as much off the mats as on the mats because you went into freelance work and set up *Pulling Guard Zine*. When did the realisation come that you could put in work both on and off the mat?
I used to blog as a white belt, where I would always hold my hand up and say I knew nothing, but I was documenting my experiences. It was always about dealing with anxiety and depression; I was lost in life and lost in jiu jitsu so I documented it.

I then started to click that maybe people would want to read about what it's like to hang out with Romulo, or Beneil Dariush, so I realised I had access to people that others wanted to know about and I started a zine. I liked the idea because it was unique, something they could physically hold. I printed them, I folded them and I would physically give them to people. I paid for everything, distribution and everything.

I contacted Budo Videos and they had a better idea - I should work for them instead. I took a job interviewing people and once a month I would produce a Q and A. It kind of helped me take off and after that it didn't work out. I digitized it, spending hour after hour in Starbucks. I had to teach myself to code, everything. I had to push content so I took other writers on board. Competing and working on the circuit a lot made it much easier.

So where did this persistence come from, as someone who self-admittedly had zero confidence? You were a white belt with anxiety but found the strength to ask world famous guys personal questions and publish it for all to see?
I think that's why I did it. I'd interview my heroes and I just thought it was so awesome. I was the audience and I just happened to be the person who got to ask the questions too. I struggled with attention at that time, especially in my personal life. I needed it but I think having a healthy outlet for that was great. People would tell me they liked it and I'd be doing something productive.

"THERE'S SO MANY STIGMAS THAT WORK AGAINST PEOPLE GETTING HELP, SO FOR ME IT WAS A WORTHY CAUSE TO REACH INTO MY OWN COMMUNITY TO GET HELP"

And now of course, instead of drawing attention to yourself, you're drawing attention to a new cause in 'Submit The Stigma' following the unfortunate circumstances surrounding your father's suicide. You're arranging super seminars and more. Tell us a little about your project?
I'm the image of my dad. I look like him, I have his issues and I have his personality. Even one time he said I had the same legs as him! He had ADHD, hyperactivity, a very creative mind, bouts of depression, anxiety and an addictive personality. From around 15 he became confined to one room in the house because my mum quit smoking so it became, 'why can't you?' He always had issues with his mind, that was it, and I have suffered the same. We didn't always get along, ever, really, but I was able to see that you need help in that situation.

But for me, finding jiu jitsu and professional help is what leads me to spearhead the campaign. I know for a fact, with help, people can recover from mental illness. Hell, one in five are affected by it and most walk around undiagnosed. Jiu jitsu is a great therapy for it alongside professional help. I think that jiu jitsu helps you talk about it and that's the problem, nobody talks about it or they're ashamed. There's so many stigmas that work against people getting help, so for me it was a worthy cause to reach into my own community to get help. It's helped me in so many ways so I need to now talk to people and tell them its okay.

I have people from our community come to me and tell me some really heavy stuff and I mean really heavy. Gianni would turn to me and tell me that it must feel good but honestly, I'm not anyone's hero or leader. This is everyone's campaign, do what you need to do with the message. Everyone has a story, it's a collective, it's not about me.

Well, how has Gianni (Grippo) helped in all of this because you met him, moved over to the East Coast, you train together and now you're taking on the world together?
He was literally there when I found out about my dad.

He's learned that anxiety can't be controlled. He's really learned how to help by being passive, genuine and loving. Even from dating he's had to learn about anxiety and depression, from stupid stuff to not knowing why you don't want to be in a gym we're visiting to serious stuff. He knows he can't break through the anxiety, it's taxing for him too so when he speaks about it, he's in the world of mental illness by being around me.

When he's by my side, he's the spitting image of a supportive family member. He's the support system that many mental health websites will tell you about. There are support groups just for the people who are caring for those with mental health issues, you know, so he's really helped out.

That transcends to the mats too. You moved to Marcelo Garcia's in New York City and you train together.
So, I'd been dating him and I'd realised I had become a much calmer person and I learned that my life was legitimately better with him. He helped me a lot and I knew I needed him in my life but I was stuck in California finishing a degree which I didn't want to do, but once I'd finished that I planned to move.

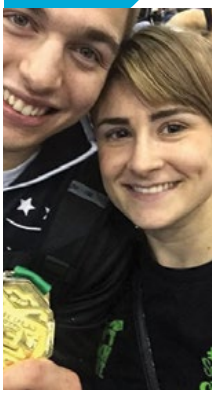
I trained at Marcelo's naturally, because Gianni did, but even if he didn't I would have because it's Alliance and it made it more seamless. Everything is temporary and I was only going to train at another Alliance branch. Who knows what might happen but right now I am there and it's my home.

So you're still competing, you're still campaigning and you're still writing. What's next?
I've had a lot of people reaching out for seminars for the campaign. We'll maybe host one in Virginia and Colorado. I'm looking to an event in New York City too with some specific instructors that I have in mind, those people are my friends who want to help but there are people who identify with the campaign who want to help. It's the community coming together.

I'm going to find ways for it to grow, on top of the patches I sell, but in terms of competing I'm going to be at the Worlds, doing seminars and travelling and I'll still be writing for Adidas Combat Sports and finishing up the Miyao Project with FloGrappling.

ERIN HERLE

Erin is a brown belt nogi world champion and student under Marcelo Garcia

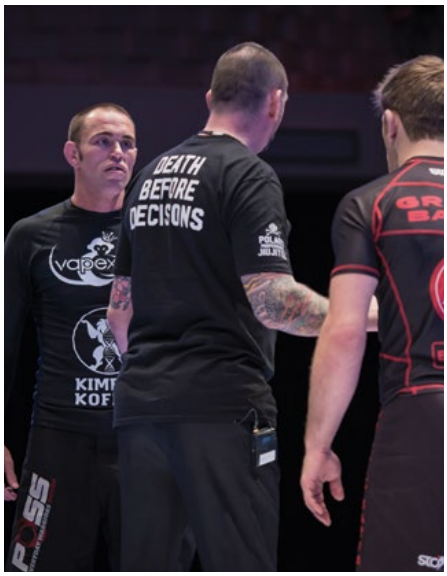


"It started to click that maybe people would want to read about what it's like to hang out with Romulo, or Beneil Dariush, so I realised I had access to people that others wanted to know about and I started a zine."

vapexhale
KIMERA
KOFFEE

RESPECT THE SCRAP PACK

JAKE SHIELDS



Jake Shields has been a dominant force in MMA over the past decade. The former UFC standout holds notable victories over the likes of Sakuraba and Dan Henderson and has held championship belts for multiple promotions. The Cesar Gracie standout has built a reputation as a skilled grappler that uses endless stamina and a relentless pace to break his opponents. *Jiu Jitsu Style* caught up with Shields, who has recently begun competing in jiu jitsu tournaments again, to discuss his evolution as a martial artist, his career in combat sports, and his views on sportsmanship. This is his story.

WORDS: FELIX RODRIGUEZ | PICTURES: ANDY DOUGLAS & CALLUM MEDCRAFT

TRAINING WITH THE ICEMAN

Jake Shields was first exposed to martial arts through wrestling when he was 10 years old. Although Shields' name is synonymous with Cesar Gracie's fight team, his combat sports training actually began by transitioning into catch wrestling under Chuck Liddell, in Saint Luis Obispo, California. When asked about how he ended up training under Liddell, Shields noted, "It was kind of random. My wrestling coach was friends with Chuck and he would go wrestle with him sometimes. He was telling me about this guy who was a badass. I'd always see Chuck around town, this was before he got pretty famous. He'd go around town with his mohawk all into his karate stuff, I figured me being a wrestler I could probably take him. So I went to train with Chuck and obviously, at the time, it didn't go too well. I got a wake up call when Chuck hit me with so many hard shots, all I could do was think, 'Wow, this is pretty cool!' so I came in and started training with Chuck and fell in love with it right away. I really liked the grappling aspect of it, even though it wasn't really jiu jitsu, it was more of a catch wrestling style, but I loved combining the elements of wrestling with the submissions and I just fell in love with jiu jitsu."

Jake's time with Liddell set the stage for his chosen career path. Chuck had shown him that it was possible and he could do it too. Shields learned a lot from Liddell during his short time at his academy, but his biggest takeaways from his time with The Iceman were "his work ethic and drive." According to Shields, "Liddell was like my role model getting into this sport, how he succeeded, he was the guy who opened my eyes and helped me realise I could make a career out of fighting. Everyone would tell me at first that I was crazy for wanting to make a career out of this, but I saw him make money and succeed so I figured I could turn this into a full time career."

CESAR GRACIE JIU JITSU

Cesar Gracie's academy is located in Concord, California, a small town about 30 minutes from San Francisco. Jake had moved to San Francisco to wrestle in college on an athletic scholarship to San Francisco State, but those plans changed once he discovered Cesar's academy. "When I moved to San Francisco for college I was already into fighting and Cesar's team was dominating the local fight scene. Guys like Dave Terrell, who is an absolute beast, Gil Castillo and the other guys were all dominating the small shows and I decided I wanted to be part of this team. So I started from day one driving 40 minutes each way to go train at Cesar's. This was the old days when training was a lot more hardcore, it wasn't like today; you'd go in there and guys were really going at it," said Shields.

Shields began training with Gracie around the year 2000, coming up alongside stalwarts like Dave Terrell, Nic and Nate Diaz and Gilbert Melendez, in a kill or be killed environment. The killers he was training with became his teammates first, then friends, and eventually they all became a tight knit family known in the fight community as 'The Scrap Pack.' When discussing the early days with Cesar, Shields recalled, "Guys like Dave Terrell, who is one of the best jiu jitsu guys to ever live, around this time Nick Diaz also started training there. Me and Nick used to go at it because he and I were kind of the new guys in the school so we'd brawl. He started bringing his brother, Nate, and I met Gilbert Melendez wrestling so I started bringing him over with me and that's kind of how the team came together. That's how it all started. Gilbert was my buddy that I'd go out drinking beers with and wrestle with, I started bringing him with me so that I wouldn't have to do the 40 minute drive by myself so I made him come and train with me and here we all are still together."

Shields and his teammates flourished under Cesar Gracie and went on to become one of the most successful teams to have competed in MMA. The grit and tenacity of the Scrap Pack is a direct reflection of their leader's influence and own fight mentality. "Cesar's always had like a very hardcore Brazilian attitude. He believes in going hard, being rough and not being weak. He has almost like a fighter mentality, that really hard, old school Brazilian mentality, which you don't really see anymore. Another really cool thing about Cesar is that he was really open minded at the time a lot of jiu jitsu schools weren't. Back then a lot of the schools didn't like leg locks, they didn't like wrestling, they didn't like judo, or sambo. They were all BJJ or nothing, and Cesar was very open-minded and he understood that the key was to mix it all up. He was very open to having sambo guys

come in and teach leg locks, he'd have me teach wrestling, he'd have all sorts of guys come in from different disciplines and that really helped our team grow."

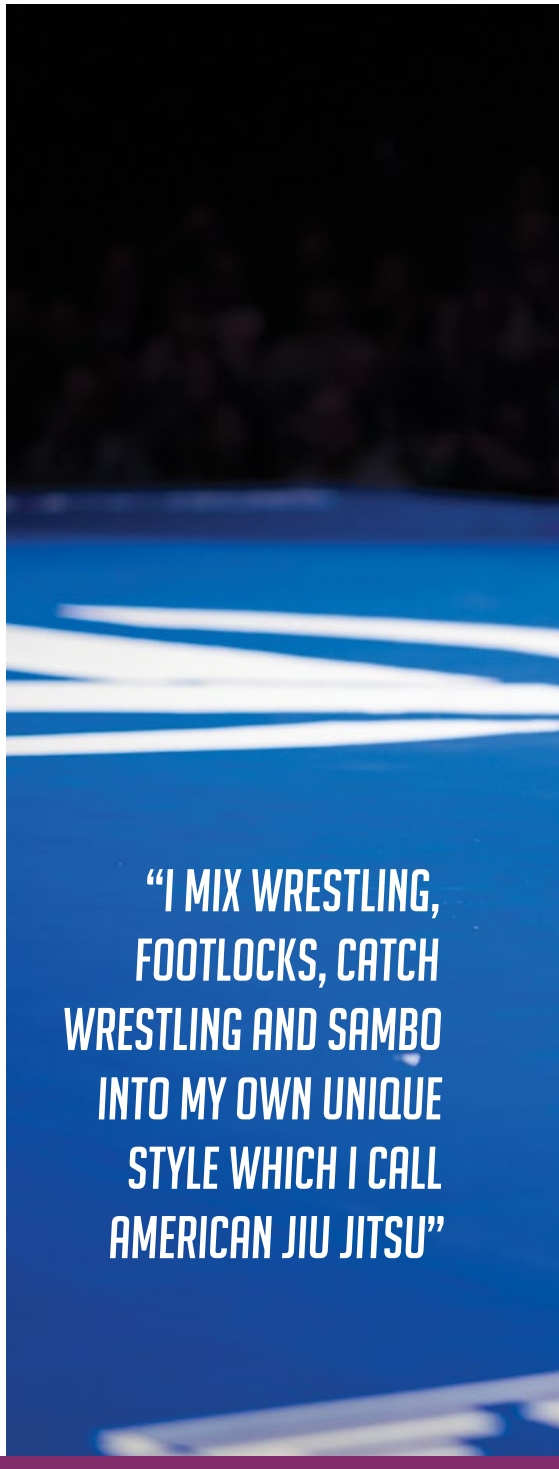
THE SCRAP PACK MENTALITY

Shields believes that he and his teammates are a product of their environment. They grew up in working class parts of California where fighting was par for the course. In his own words, "I grew up in a rough area. It's beautiful country and stuff, but it's one of those rough areas to grow up in, especially in that time period, people would go around and they would be fighting that was what they'd do. You'd walk around and if someone was looking at you wrong you'd go handle it. I think it's changed quite a bit since back then, but back then if someone was staring you down and you didn't fight them you'd be labelled a p***y. That was the environment we came up in and that's part of our mentality. Same with me, Nick or Nate, if you approach us right everything is fine, we're some of the nicest guys you'll ever meet and some of the most loyal, but if you come at us with the wrong mentality it's different."

Shields, Melendez, the Diaz Brothers and the rest of the Scrap Pack are a cohesive team, and each member has the other's back. Their philosophy is simple: respect us or else, and that fierce sense of loyalty was engrained in them by their head instructor. "Cesar is like a father figure to the team. We all started with him at such a young age, having him as a mentor trying to guide us, you know? We were all young kids wanting to fight so it was good to have him there pushing us in the right direction."

Jake pauses for a second and then continues, "It's not that Cesar always gave us the best advice, but mostly, like I said, it comes down to that hardcore Brazilian mentality where they're always down to fight. Sometimes, you know, it's not the best when your mentor is down to fight too. That may be why we kind of have this reputation and attitude of always getting into fights, but none of us are bad guys. Nick and Nate especially have a bad rap, but if you get to know them they're so nice and down to earth guys. The thing is they don't take s**t and if guys are gonna come and start mouthing off to them then trouble starts, but if you're gonna be cool, we're gonna be cool. That attitude is a combination of where we grew up, where our gym was, and kind of how the area and the time was."

Cesar Gracie's team has remained together through the years, loyal to their master and each other. This is less and less common nowadays and that fact is not lost on Shields, who noted, "Most teams are constantly changing, teams come and go, we managed to stay together now for 14-15 years, we all came together in 2001, it's pretty crazy that we've all stayed together, never had a problem between anyone from our team, and we've all managed to be successful and



"I MIX WRESTLING, FOOTLOCKS, CATCH WRESTLING AND SAMBO INTO MY OWN UNIQUE STYLE WHICH I CALL AMERICAN JIU JITSU"

remain so. It's pretty rare what we've done, we've all stayed together, we all have a great work ethic, we all train really hard, but we're not trying to hurt each other. I mean we all go in there and beat the hell out of each other, but we know how to train without giving each other injuries, and we're all mentally tough so we all are able to push through things and keep on going."

AMERICAN JIU JITSU

Shields is best known for his successes in MMA competition, but he is a lifelong fan of jiu jitsu, and has been quite successful in BJJ competitions when he's devoted himself to them. For example, he won Pans as a purple belt and placed third at Abu Dhabi that same year. What makes his victory at Pans even more impressive is that he had only worn the gi in training a handful of times prior to that tournament. "Right about when I went to Cesar's all the guys were already training jiu jitsu, but it was focused towards MMA. My teammates were all wearing gis, but I hadn't yet, I was mostly training no gi, but I was winning all my matches, and Cesar decided to promote me, first blue and then purple, but Cesar started getting a lot of crap from all the other Brazilian guys who were saying there was no way I could be a purple belt. That was the reason why I did Pans. I just went and put the gi on a few days before the tournament and then went and completely dominated my bracket. That same year I took third in Abu Dhabi so after that people started going like 'OK, I guess he's a purple belt,' said Shields.

Although he has devoted the majority of his career to MMA he has followed BJJ's evolution and progress. When asked about how jiu jitsu has changed over the years he noted, "Jiu Jitsu has changed so much! First off I love the fact that there are gyms everywhere now, and so many people training and getting the benefits of jiu jitsu. I think it's great that so many people can use jiu jitsu as an outlet. The art itself has changed quite a bit, originally it was a fighting style for MMA, now the sport has evolved so much that there are new styles evolving just for the sport aspect. I'm not going to knock them, I just don't necessarily think they're all good for fighting. It's not something I ever got into, but I don't want to knock it for the people that like it for themselves.

"There is so much growth overall, currently we're seeing good evolution with these sub only tournaments. To me they're really interesting, I have nothing against the IBJJF, but I've never really been excited by them. Now with all these sub only formats popping up, it's a really exciting time to be in the sport. Then you have guys like John Danaher who are completely revolutionising the sport with leg locks, the stuff he's coming up with is insane. The guy is just a

Jake Shields and AJ Agazarm battling for position in what was an extremely entertaining match from Polaris Pro 3

JAKE SHIELDS

genius, I spent a bit of time up there training with him and he is just phenomenal with the new directions he's pushing the sport towards. That's what's great about BJJ; it's always getting pushed into new directions and sometimes it comes full circle too with techniques going out of style and then making a comeback."

Shields' BJJ training was focused towards mixed martial arts, but he sees value in all forms of jiu jitsu training. He noted, "We were learning jiu jitsu for MMA competition with Cesar. At the time we were all interested in fighting so it was more for going out there and winning fights. There are so many directions in which to take jiu jitsu and I like all of them though. I see a lot of people out there fighting whether gi or no gi, sport jiu jitsu or self defence, to me it's just silly, we're all in the same sport so I don't understand why there are so many people arguing over what the sport should be when it can be whatever each person wants it to be for their selves. Just do whatever makes you happy, do what you enjoy."

MMA AND GRAPPLING

For Jake Shields, Mixed Martial Arts pays the bills so that is his priority. That said, he loves competition and he is a fan of submission only grappling tournaments. When discussing what's next for him he noted, "I have one more fight with WSOF, probably fighting Jon Fitch pretty soon. I'm taking it one fight at a time and re-evaluating what I want to do. There are lots of things happening, WSOF is growing, Bellator is growing so there are a lot of options with MMA. I'm also really starting to enjoy competing in these submission-only events. They're a great way to keep me active in competition without the stress of fighting."

Jake continues to focus his training on MMA, but is also incorporating jiu jitsu specific training for submission matches like the one he just had with AJ Agazarm at Polaris 3. "I train in a gi now and then, but not much. I mix wrestling, footlocks, catch wrestling and sambo into my own unique style which I call American Jiu Jitsu. I've always loved jiu jitsu, I like the rules of these new sub tournaments. I don't have anything against the IBJJF and I wouldn't be opposed to doing one of their tournaments, but it's kind of hard when there is no pay in it. Not that there is crazy money in jiu jitsu, but it's a little more motivating when you can make a little money and if it's televised it helps build your hype so it's definitely fun to jump into these sub tournaments.

"Training for sub only tournaments hasn't really changed, I just kind of hop in there while I'm doing my MMA training. I might up my jiu jitsu a bit more in frequency a couple of weeks before, but other than that I do pretty much everything the same. If I'm going to start doing more of these sub formats it would probably be smart to make some changes and focus a little more on what the competition is doing. My training varies depending on who I have around and what everyone is preparing for. I try to get in at least five trains a week, but sometimes it's tough with the sparring, strength and conditioning and the wrestling, it can be tough. At the very least I try to get at least a couple of rounds in after all the other training."

> "I STARTED TRAINING WITH CHUCK LIDDELL AND FELL IN LOVE WITH IT RIGHT AWAY. I REALLY LIKED THE GRAPPLING ASPECT OF IT, EVEN THOUGH IT WASN'T REALLY JIU JITSU"

POLARIS 3

Sportsmanship is important to Jake Shields. He believes in being respectful to opponents and being humble in victory. Unfortunately for him, his last two matches have been mired in controversy due to unsportsmanlike behaviour. His MMA fight against Rousimar Palhares and his grappling match against AJ Agazarm both ended with Shields and his opponents in heated exchanges after the fights were over. According to Shields he was reacting to unsportsmanlike conduct from his opponents in both instances. "Sportsmanship has a wide range of interpretation, you should be respectful of your opponent; a little s**t talking is fine to sell a fight, but we should have basic respect. The two opponents you mentioned took it to completely different levels.

"Toquinho, there is just no one else like him, the dude is trying to break people's bones even in training. With me the most insane part was the eye gouging, it wasn't like he was raking the fingers, he was literally taking his thumb and trying to put my eyes out. It was insane that the ref didn't stop the fight and disqualify him right away. As far as AJ goes, the guy is just a d**k. He's not a psychopath like Toquinho, they're not in the same league. He was talking s**t before the match, during the match, after the match. I mean he was being dirty using chin rubs: he was also fish hooking me, and he was gouging my eyes, but it was kind of funny because Toquinho had actually tried to put my eyes out so having AJ come with his raking wasn't that bad. Usually I'd be furious if someone did that, but after experiencing Toquinho, AJ was just an annoyance," said Shields.

OLD SCHOOL MENTALITY

Cesar Gracie's fight team is brash, they demand respect and are not afraid of taking it if not offered voluntarily. Shields found a mentor in Gracie and brothers-in-arms in Terrell, Melendez, and the Diaz brothers. They've been a virtually unchanged team since 2001 and have been an insanely successful one in the process. Shields and his teammates make no apologies for who they are or how they behave. Simply put, they respect those who offer respect and have little mercy for those who don't.Their mentality is equal parts a product of the environment they came up in and the influence of their mentor. Fighting is part of Shield's psyche; it is what he does and who he is. Shields and his teammates aren't looking for a fight, but they certainly won't back down if a fight happened to find them. The Scrap Pack is definitely a throwback team with old school principles that are less common these days and Jake Shields wouldn't have it any other way.

BJJ WOMEN

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PASSIONATE
CONFIDENT
POWERFUL
MODERN
STRONG
FIERCE
FREE

WOMEN
ULTRA LIGHT KIMONO
THE LIGHTEST GI EVER MADE

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WORDS & PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

It seems a lot can happen in six months. Rewind back to November of last year and Gabriel Arges, a rising star from team Gracie Barra, was contemplating his potential omission from the Nogi Worlds due to injury, and with it his last chance of a major gold in 2015. Not only did Arges rally his strength and walk away as nogi world champion, he went on to receive his black belt on the podium, before picking pick up European and Abu Dhabi World Pro titles the following January and April respectively. Like we said, a lot can happen in six months.

GABRIEL ARGES

"It's such a blessing man," says Arges on his amazing run of results. "If you stop and really think about things, you never know where your life is going to take you. Going into the Nogi Worlds I had in my head maybe one more year as a brown belt, but I won the competition, got my black belt and then two months later I was European black belt champion. It's crazy when you stop and think about it."

Having been a black belt for less than 200 days, you'd be forgiving for asking, 'who is this Gabriel guy?' 25 year-old Arges started to make a name for himself back in 2013 after becoming a purple belt nogi world champion. His first major world title proved to be the catalyst for a run of extended success that included multiple Abu Dhabi World Pro, Pan American and European successes.

Born and raised in Belo Horizonte, in the state of Minas Geras, Arges was exposed to sport and competitive situations from a very young age. "I have pretty much been an athlete since I was born," explains Gabriel. "Before I was even one year old my mum took me to swimming classes, and I did my first competition when I was, like, six. I swam until I was about 12 and then I started to take football really seriously. I was very focussed on my football, but around 16 I started having to study more and I also started to do jiu jitsu."

Growing up in Belo Horizonte, Gabriel started his jiu jitsu journey at a local Gracie Barra affiliate academy run by Fernando Failho, who was a brown belt at the time. Though his passion for the gentle art was prevalent from the word go, it wasn't until he received his blue belt that Arges started to ponder his true potential in the sport.

"After training for a little while, I ended up moving to the Gracie Barra headquarters in Belo Horizonte (BH) and that's where Marcelo "Uirapuru" Azevedo was the head coach," says Arges. "That's really when I thought more about jiu jitsu and what I could maybe do with it as a competitor."

It was at Gracie Barra BH that Gabriel would forge perhaps the most important relationship of his career. Though still only a purple belt at the time, Gracie Barra standout, Felipe Pena, was also a student at Arges' new academy, and it didn't take them long to realise they were chasing the same dreams.

"Right when I moved to the Gracie Barra headquarters Felipe (Pena) was getting ready to go to the US for a training camp with Romulo Barral," states Gabriel. "That was in 2011, the year Felipe won the Worlds at purple belt in his weight and absolute. So before Felipe travelled to the US we had one training session together and we hit it off straight away and became friends. I was a blue belt at that time. Obviously Felipe really blew up around that time and he came back from the Worlds as a brown belt.

"Felipe and I were two of the guys that used to spent a lot of time at the gym, so we'd always be training together and spending lots of time

> "I was just telling my students that after winning the nogi Worlds in 2013 that was when something changed in me and I had the confidence to go out there and chase the big titles and really believe in myself."

together. Even at the weekends we'd get together to drill positions at Felipe's house and stuff like that."

Under the guidance of Uirapuru and Felipe, Arges started to make the transition from recreational jiu jitsu enthusiast to full time athlete. Though still a blue belt, and with no major titles to his name, his close exposure to Pena helped keep him motivated and determined to follow his friend's footsteps on the competition tatami.

Arges' journey took another telling twist in late 2011, when the legendary Romulo Barral arrived in Brazil for a visit. "Romulo is actually from our gym as well – Gracie Barra BH – so he came at the end of 2011 and that's when I first met him," states Gabriel. "Romulo was then planning on doing a camp in the US before the Pan Ams and him and Felipe invited me to come and stay for three or four months in Northridge, California to train for the Worlds. Obviously I didn't think twice, as both Romulo and Felipe were both my idols. I thought it was exactly what I needed to boost my career and take my jiu jitsu to the next level."

The guidance of Romulo and Felipe, paired with Arges' unparalleled work ethic, prooved to be a perfect recipe for success. After eventually moving to the US, Gabriel's game began to expand to the point that he's now one of the most technical guardeiros on the circuit.

"I think I'm finally getting a good understanding of my guard; my strengths and my weaknesses," says Gabriel in honest reflection. "I think my style really is a mix of Romulo and Felipe's – so a little bit of that old school spider guard as well as some modern positions from 50/50 and stuff like that. So yeah, I'd say my strengths are definitely spider guard from Romulo and then de la Riva with modern positions from Felipe. – I guess that says it all (laughs). I've trained with those guys so much and I really believe we are the hardest workers out there. I drill and then work on my guard so, so much.

"I do believe you have to have a talent, as it's not easy to play guard, but drilling and gaining knowledge has to be there as well. For me it's been a lot of hard work, gaining knowledge from the right people and then also a little bit of talent to help on the way."

2012 proved to be a year of development for Arges, but the competition results he was hoping for were still not coming. Testament to his character, he didn't give up on his dream and used this as motivation to train harder and smarter.

"2012 was the first year that I took competition really seriously and I didn't really win anything big considering the amount of effort I was putting in," explains Arges. "The same for 2013 – I won some good things, but not really the major titles that I was really aiming for. Actually that was a very important time for me, because I was thinking that maybe I should focus more on other things and devote my time to my engineering course if jiu jitsu wasn't really paying off. What was huge for me in 2013 was when I won the Nogi Worlds, as that changed my whole mind-set.

"I was just telling my students that after winning the Nogi Worlds in 2013 that was when something changed in me and I had the confidence to go out there and chase the big titles and really believe in myself."

And if titles at the lower belts were not enough, Arges' belief in his ability has been vindicated in 2016. After just one month as a black belt, he won the IBJJF Irvine Invitational absolute title, before heading to Lisbon and closing the middle heavyweight division with his coach, Romulo Barral. Gabriel finally had a title he craved; he was a black belt European champion. But it hasn't stopped there.

The Abu Dhabi World Pro is, without doubt, one of the biggest tests you can expect as a competitor, with the best athletes always in attendance, fighting for medals and cash. Arges was crowned a World Pro champion at both purple and brown belt, but testing his skills in the -77kg black belt division was always going to be a tough test for a faixa preta with just six month's experience. Well, you'd think so anyway…

"This was a dream come true for sure," says Gabriel on being crowned an Abu Dhabi World Pro black belt champion. "I dreamt for so long about competing as a black belt and trying to be one of the best in the world. My mind-set is to always be confident and I really believed I would be a world champion, but it was a dream to do it my first year as a black belt. It was also great to beat some big names and guys like Satoshi, even when lots of people probably still don't know who I am. Everyone around me believed in me though, they knew what I could achieve. They weren't surprised when I won, but in honesty I was very surprised it came so fast."

No one could have predicted Gabriel would have come away with gold in a division stacked with so much talent. The likes of Lucas Lepri, Davi Ramos and of course, Roberto Satoshi, would have all been favourites ahead of the Gracie Barra man, who perhaps pulled-off the upset of the tournament in winning the title. As a fighter, Arges' guard game is just stunning to watch. His movement are fluid, his techniques leave you baffled and – above all – he's composed. Take a closer look at the pool of talent Gabriel trains with though and we really shouldn't be surprised. After all, iron sharpens iron.

"I don't think people really realise how much talent we have on our team when everybody is together," says Gabriel. "We have world-class guys at every weight. We've Felipe, Romulo, Edwin (Najmi), AJ (Agazarm) and there's so many more. Right now we have Otavio Sousa training with us every day in the mornings as well, so there's such high level training here and you get used to that. Once you have that high level training every day at the gym, competition just becomes another day of training for you."

Having left his native Brazil for the US, Arges now finds himself as a full time teacher at Gracie Barra Northridge – the home of Romulo Barral. Like most jiu jitsu athletes, his time is spent teaching, training, eating, sleeping and repeating. However, like most 25 year-olds, he is quick to state that he likes to have fun at the weekends, and he does have interests away from the mats.

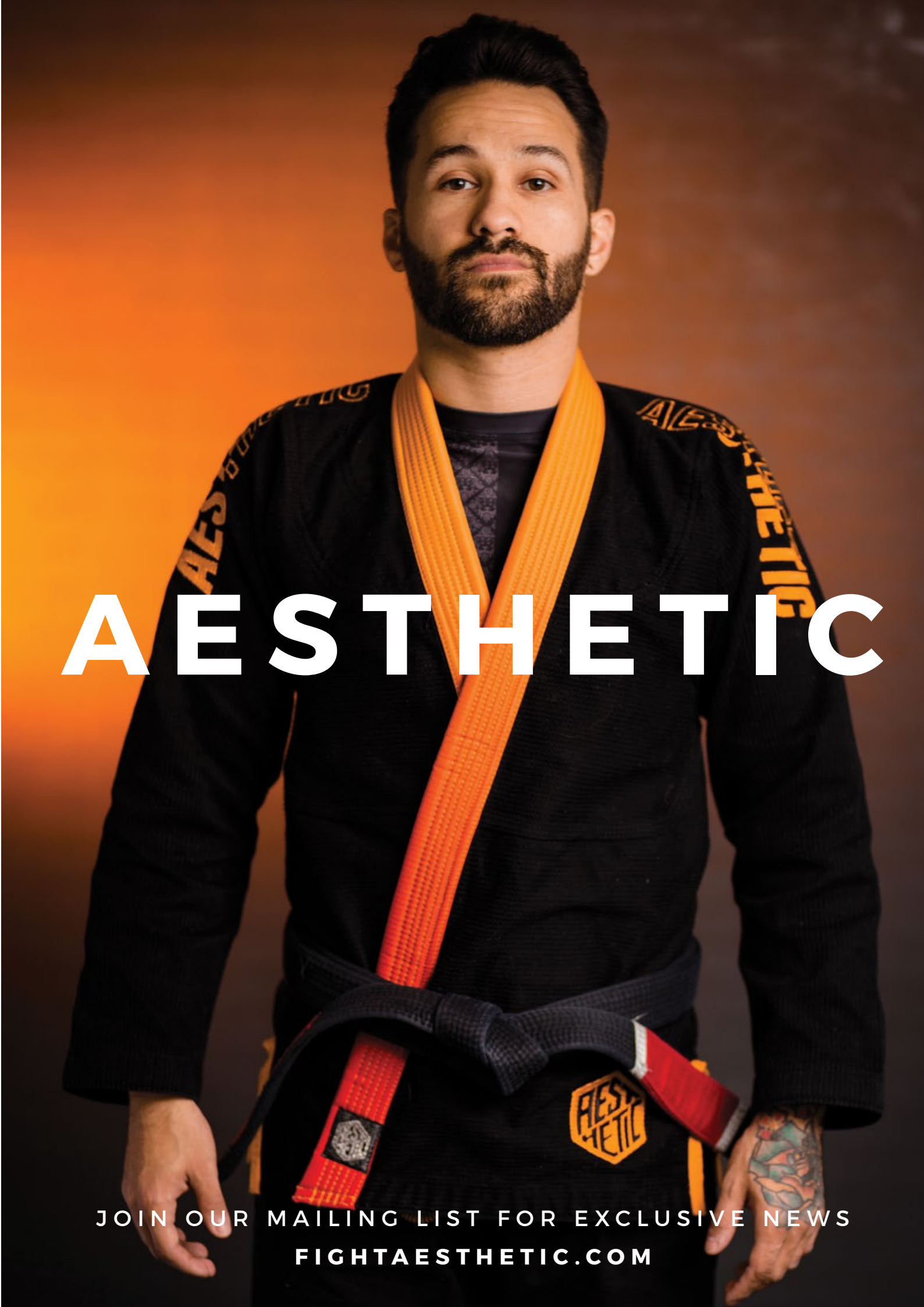
"I also like playing around with video editing and making highlights online," explains Gabriel. "I wish I had more time to do that. I only do basic stuff, but I love to watch videos online and I did some highlights for Felipe. He sometimes says, 'man, you've got to make a highlight of me from this competition' and I can't so no to him, so I find time (laughs)."

With such an explosive start to his career at black belt, the jiu jitsu community is lucky to have another elite-level athlete to watch and enjoy for years to come. For Gabriel, the goal is simple: more medals, more titles and basically, more jiu jitsu.

"Nothing is confirmed yet, but I'm looking forward to doing some super fights with Berkut BJJ and Copa Podio," says Arges. "I am also hoping to fight at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slams around the world this year as well. Basically any tournaments that really value the athletes, I want to be there fighting for medals."

Gabriel would like to say a big thank you to his sponsor, Storm Kimonos, who started supporting him when he was a purple belt with no titles and also his other sponsor, doFIT.

"I THINK MY STYLE REALLY IS A MIX OF ROMULO AND FELIPE'S – SO A LITTLE BIT OF THAT OLD SCHOOL SPIDER GUARD AS WELL AS SOME MODERN POSITIONS"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"TO WORK TOWARDS CREATING A SUPPORTIVE AND MOTIVATING SPORTS ENVIRONMENT TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN JIU-JITSU SPORTS." THAT'S THE VISION OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES JIU JITSU FEDERATION (UAEJJF) AS STATED ON THEIR OFFICIAL WEBSITE. THROUGH THE INVESTMENT IN, AND ORGANISATION OF, WELL-RUN TOURNAMENTS AROUND THE GLOBE, THE UAEJJF IS INTENT ON BECOMING THE RISING TIDE WHICH RAISES ALL SHIPS WHEN IT COMES TO WORLDWIDE PROFESSIONALISM IN JIU JITSU.

THE UAE

JIU JITSU EXPERIENCE

WORDS: RYAN BALDI
PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

"THE GRAND SLAM HAS A £500,000 INVESTMENT TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER, SO THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE IS THE QUALITY OF THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT"

The UAEJJF was founded in 2012 under the guidance of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince and Deputy Commander in Chief of the United Arab Emirates Army. Sheikh Mohammed's dedication to the growth of jiu jitsu was inspired by his brother Sheikh Tahnoon, the first Emirati black belt and creator of the prestigious Abu Dhabi Combat Club (ADCC).

Having caught the jiu jitsu bug while studying in San Diego in the mid-nineties, Sheikh Tahnoon came up with the concept of staging a grappling championship which would welcome participants from many different backgrounds – from sambo and wrestling, to jiu jitsu and judo. The creation of the ADCC Championships in 1999 represented a watershed moment for the grappling community, as the biannual tournament offered significant cash prizes for its winners.

Having witnessed the success of his brother's brainchild, and how the ADCC event had become the standard bearer for no gi submission grappling, Sheikh Mohammed wanted to create a tournament of his own – only his would focus on putting gi jiu jitsu firmly in the limelight.

And so came the inaugural Abu Dhabi World Pro Jiu-Jitsu Championship (WPJJC) in 2009. The WPJJC, just like the ADCC, would offer cash prizes to divisional medallists, as well as a hefty bounty for the absolute (open-weight) champion. The tournament is held annually in Abu Dhabi and has been organised and overseen officially by the UAEJJF since 2013.

The 2016 incarnation of the WPJJC saw divisional black belt champions awarded $9,000, with the absolute offering competitors a chance of a further $30,000. For high-level competitors whose primary source of income comes from running jiu jitsu schools and teaching seminars rather than competitive success, these sums represent a major step towards making jiu jitsu a professional sport. The prize money, coupled with the way the organisers ensure the tournament runs with the precision of a master Swiss watchmaker, is helping jiu jitsu make huge strides towards achieving the kind of excellence – both in terms of its competitors and its infrastructure – that you would expect from a major sport.

Gracie Barra black belt, and WPJJC silver medallist, Victor Estima is a veteran of the competition. "When I went to compete the first time, it was in 2009, the first year that they came up with the World Pro concept." Estima told *Jiu Jitsu Style*. "That's when I heard that we would compete and, at the end of it, receive a prize. There was a big hype about it because that was when we found out that jiu jitsu could start becoming a professional sport. Obviously, we had a lot of hope, but we never knew how seriously the organisation was going to take it. The organisation was very similar to the other organisations like the IBJJF at first, the only difference was that we had much more coverage in the local media in the UAE, and they were giving prize money.

"I was very fortunate to go all the way to the finals, and to be able to come home with a little bit of a reward from the hard work for the many years of training I've done. It was pretty exciting for a competitor, especially at that time because we could not make money from jiu jitsu unless we taught seminars. That was my first initial thought, to earn from the results of my competitions."

In addition to the financial rewards, Estima also values the way the WPJJC and its organisers treat the athletes: "From the first time it already had a nice attention to the well-being of the athletes. We would have some food, they would have drinks around to support the athletes.

"Over the years, as they progressed, they started to take things to the next level." Estima continued. "They started to treat us in a much more professional manner, which allowed us to feel much more special. Sometimes, because jiu jitsu is not a mainstream sport, the athletes are just left to take care of themselves when they go to a competition; they're not taken care of at all. So, when they started to pay for the champions of previous years to fly there, stay in a nice hotel with all the food covered, they started to create a feeling of professionalism within the sport."

And it's not just the black belts who receive this kind of special treatment. The WPJJC also offers cash prizes for champions at the lower belt-levels. Furthermore, competitors have the chance to have their entire trip – flights, hotel, meals, transport, and competition entry – paid for by entering one of the many World Pro Trial (recently rebranded as the National Pro) events around the world. The absolute champion at each belt-level wins the opportunity to compete on the world stage without spending a penny of their own money.

Roger Gracie Academy purple belt Munkhbayar "Muujig" Altantugs has competed at the WPJJC twice, once via winning open-weight gold at a trial event in Poland, and once funding the trip himself. "When I won the prize with the tickets, everything was straight forward." Munkhbayer said. "When I didn't win I had to do everything on my own which was more difficult. When I won the expenses paid trip, the organisers put on a shuttle bus to the venue which went every half-hour."

As a regular tournament competitor, Munkhbayar felt that the WPJJC had a slightly different feel to the run-of-the-mill local events, or even the bigger IBJJF competitions that he'd entered: "The tournament was hands-down the most professionally run event I've been to. It seemed to have the most money spent on it of all the events I've competed in. Everything was on time, everything was really good. It is a really good experience to have. It was one of the most professional events I've been to. The prize of tickets, travel and accommodation is amazing if you win it. I believe a lot more competitors should compete in the tournament to help the sport grow."

That's a sentiment that Estima echoes. As head of Gracie Barra UK and coach to many students

at his Nottingham academy, Estima encourages his athletes to take part in the National Pros if they can: "I encourage them [to enter WPJJC events], and every year some of my guys have been fortunate to win the double gold to get to the main event. This year we have Sean Coates going there at purple belt.

"Some of my students went to several different National Pro events to be able to get the expenses paid prize." Estima continued. "I think it's a way that you can get the guys competing more regularly because there's more competitions around, and there's also the chance to go to the main event with the possibility to earn some money from winning. And also the idea of hunting that professionalism; I think that it's amazing to have that opportunity to earn a living through something you love. I think that my guys are very inspired to compete in every tournament that is out there in Europe.

"When I was a blue belt, I had to save my lunch money from school to be able to go to one tournament in a year, when I was living in Brazil. I was winning every single tournament in my state by far – nobody would touch me – but I could never even afford competition registration if I didn't save my own money because my parents wouldn't be able to afford it. So when I see a blue belt today winning a trial, which could be three or four fights, they can enter the major tournament and win some money while getting flights and hotels paid for, it's like a dream come true for a jiu jitsu athlete. It's going to definitely help the sport grow and become more appealing."

That growth is exactly what the UAEJJF is striving for. It's clear that the organisation is dedicated to pushing jiu jitsu forward, from grass-roots right up to the world-class level. The UEAJJF has overseen the introduction of jiu jitsu into the curriculum of over 100 Emirati schools, as well as creating the Abu Dhabi Youth Cup which is now part of the WPJJC event schedule. The UAEJJF is also committed to spreading their brand of slickly-run, high-level competitions around the world. In addition to the various National Pro events, last year they began the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam tour which saw tournaments held in Tokyo, Los Angeles and Rio de Janeiro, with the fourth event taking place in London earlier this year.

"IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST PROFESSIONAL EVENTS I'VE BEEN TO. THE PRIZE OF TICKETS, TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION IS AMAZING IF YOU WIN IT"

Director of Euro Pro Sports Ltd, Gus Oliveira. has been organising jiu jitsu competitions in the UK for almost a decade. He's also been involved with jiu jitsu in Abu Dhabi since 2009 and is now the man tasked with organising the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam events in London. "The level of the London Grand Slam speaks for itself, whoever entered saw that this was not the normal thing." Oliveira told *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

"The Grand Slam has a £500,000 investment to be able to deliver, so the biggest difference is the quality of the people behind it." Oliveira said, speaking of the team responsible for the Grand Slam events. "It's a team that works together, it's not an individual who wants to succeed by themselves, or get their name in lights. We have 10 guys who are very proud of what they are doing. Even though I am the Grand Slam London organiser, everyone is the organiser – you turn up and you feel proud of your work. It's like going into battle and, when you look behind you, you see your soldiers are there supporting you, and you're like 'ok, we can deliver this.' We are already looking ahead to the next Grand Slam and thinking of the small details that we can improve. It's only going to get better."

And the UAEJJF are not content to rest on their laurels, they are setting their sights on yet more progress. Oliveira said of their future plans: "What I can confirm, and it'll be happening this season, we are launching the International Pros, i.e. a Madrid International Pro, a London International Pro, and so on. These will be open to every nationality and will have a rankings system, gi and no-gi. We are looking to have perhaps 10 of those running around Europe this season.

"The idea is to have a proper international pro tour. We are looking to have a world ranking, a continental ranking and a country ranking. Say for example, we have a fighter from Lithuania. We might not have any events in his country but he can follow the tour and become number 15 in the world, number 10 in Europe, and number one in Lithuania. We need to praise those people, those people need awards and prizes."

Estima is also hopeful that the UAEJJF can continue to grow, and that other organisations will follow suit: "I think there is still a lot to come, it is impossible for us to make a living just through [competition] jiu jitsu. I think that [the UAEJJF] are doing as much as possible, and I think that it's only just the start. It would be nice to see, one day, that we could compete three or four times a year then be able to live the rest of the year from the money we won, because we put so much effort into training and preparation and it's not easy to do.

And in that respect, the UAEJJF and the world's top black belts are on the same wavelength: for an elite black belt – with the talent, hard work and life-long dedication they've given to the sport – true professionalism is much deserved, long-overdue and can't come soon enough.

TACTICS & TECHNIQUES MMXVI WITH CHRIS HAUETER & ROBERT ABEYTA JR.

World-renowned Brazilian jiu jitsu practitioner and artist, Chris Haueter, and global influence tactician, Rob Abeyta Jr., recently launched their joint art exhibition in Singapore.

Chris Haueter is a black belt under Rigan Machado, a grade achieved on December 1996, making Haueter a member of the "BJJ Dirty Dozen", the first 12 practitioners outside Brazil to achieve the rank of black belt in our martial art.

Tactics and Techniques MMXVI aims to highlight the latent creativity within the Brazilian jiu jitsu community and bring the world's fastest growing sport to mainstream consciousness.

The exhibition is hosted at The Gentle Art Academy, which is a revolutionary martial arts space that has recognised the energy of the artistic parallels between the sport of Brazilian jiu jitsu, skateboarding and streetwear. The academy aims to create a bridge between Brazilian jiu jitsu and other creative communities.

Graphic art satirist & jiu jitsu preceptor, ***Chris Haueter***, became known for his early rise in a field zealously dominated by a patriarchal hierarchy; though shunning the rigid dogma, he would embrace his Brazilian mentors and their teachings throughout his career.

Combining humour with strategic analysis learned during his stints in military and police service (and a fearful childhood obsessing over survival) he developed an innovative, scientifically based teaching method.

Using concepts and metaphor, he would conceptually coach others and help spread Brazilian jiu jitsu, seeing it grow exponentially at the beginning of this century. As one of the first 12 non-Brazilians to attain the coveted black belt, he used his notoriety as an outsider to parlay his latent artistry into something accessible for those yearning for a visual glimpse of a sport many find impenetrable and elusive. His broader understanding of physical violence and combative sports would end up finessed into his multimedia visual art style.

A self-described political junkie, he easily shifts between the mats, where he finds a Zen sense of fellowship with his fellow practitioners and students, and the urban hell/utopia of LA that's been his home for five decades, which continues to fuel him creatively.

A doting and attentive father, he can be found almost daily, at home, doing art and teaching jiu jitsu in 'The Garage' in Redondo Beach, traveling regularly around the globe to give jokingly self-deprecating seminars, and frequenting artistic haunts in his avant-garde visual chronicling of an America gone absurd…

Robert Abeyta Jr. is the founder and director of Los Angeles based creative applications group, DualForces (http://dualforces.com/). Robert is focusing on consulting and special projects, including research and development within emerging technologies, Robert has created and produced for Nike, Undefeated, Stussy, Burton and Shoyoroll.

Previous to DualForces, Robert served as a Director of Global Special Projects for Stussy, collaborating with brands including Levis, Neighborhood, GShock and Vans. An extensive history of working with Nike, Girl Skateboards and Thrasher has lead Robert to collaborative projects outside the realm of apparel and sport including works with Spike Jonze and French director and Academy Award Winner Michel Gondry. In addition, Robert is credited for numerous music packaging designs ranging from the seminal punk band LOS CRUDOS to The Transplants and LA hip hop legends Cypress Hill, MACK 10 and DJ Quick. Robert's work has been displayed in many exhibitions globally.

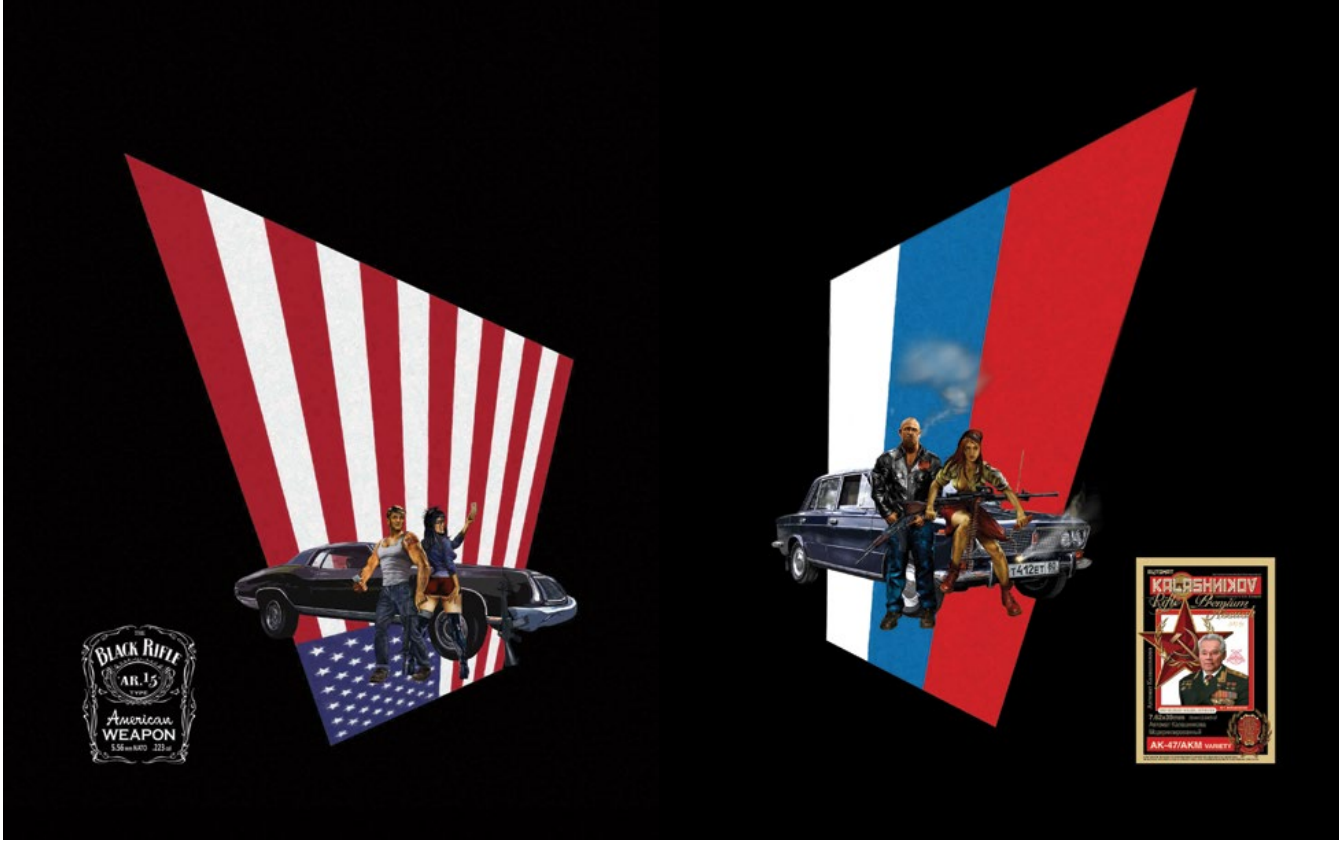
THE EXHIBITION:

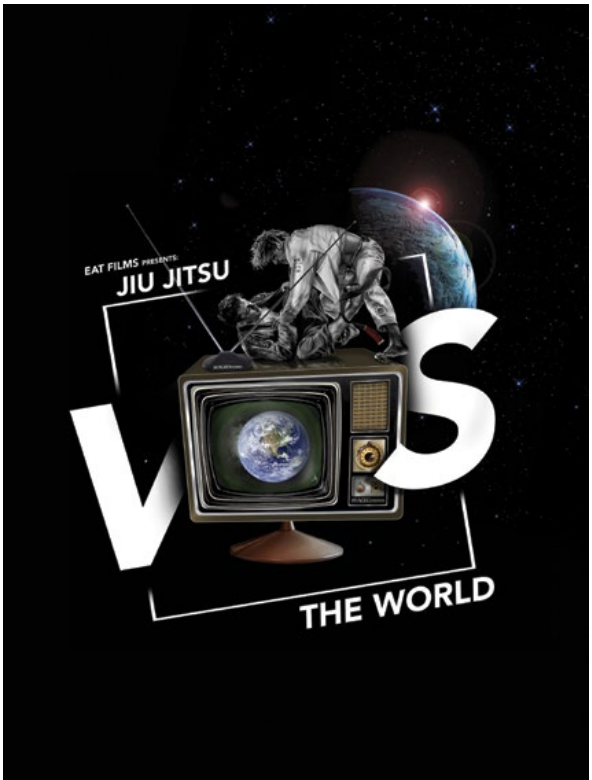
Beneath the guise of stylized images, there lies an undercurrent of tactical movement structured with techniques. As practitioners of jiu jitsu, this model of the combat arts seeps into the visual language. Smashed with cultural iconography, geopolitics and secret teachings the subject matter has specific historic references and training cues for the viewer to explore. Chris Haueter and Robert Abeyta Jr. utilize multiple mediums from painting to sculpture in presenting works specific to the environment they spend countless hours in training mind, body and spirit.

The Tactics and Techniques exhibition was a great success with more than 70 guests from both the BJJ and the creative industry convening upon The Gentle Art Academy to view the art of Chris Haueter and Rob Abeyta Jr.

The exhibition also included a talk by Rob and Chris, which discussed how the creative design process is very much like the journey to seek BJJ knowledge when Chris was starting out: i.e. you had to put in work to seek out the techniques and separate the authentic from the hype. Rob's work at DualForces working with the top apparel and design companies in the world follows very much the same process where authenticity is the key to creating meaningful campaigns.

The exhibition concluded with the release of 12 hand-numbered and signed Chris Haueter MagiKimono gis.





Clockwise from the top: 1. The Eagle and the Bear 2. Fantasy sale 3. Into the void 4. Marilyn in the airlock 5. MK Girl number five 6. Jiu jitsu vs the world 7. Galaxina

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WORDS: OLIVER GEDDES

DO I NEED PRIVATE LESSONS?

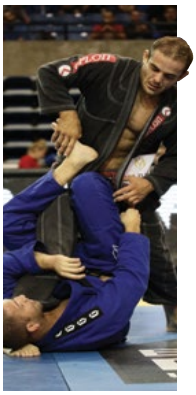
Let's get this out of the way to begin with - no-one needs private lessons. But there are a few different groups of people who might benefit substantially from introducing them to their training schedule.

THOSE WITH LIMITED TIME OR AN IRREGULAR SCHEDULE

I'm going to bundle these two together because they are similar in several ways. Some students have exceptionally busy schedules and can only make it to training for one or two hours a week, and would like to maximise the value of that time by ensuring it is entirely focused on learning and development. In a typical class, a lot of time is spent warming up and drilling, and although there will be one or more instructors keeping an eye on everyone, they cannot be everywhere at once. Since in drilling you will also be the uke (recipient of the technique) half of the time, when you have only so much time in the week you would obviously benefit from having an instructor watching - and feeling - every movement. Equally, if you work hours which mean you can only get to one or two classes a week (or, worst case, none at all) then private classes may be required to get as much mat time as you would want.

THOSE LOOKING TO EXPAND THEIR GAME

You've been rolling well for the past few months, everything has been going well, you've found a few techniques that work well for you, but you've struggled with moving beyond that base into anything new. You were comfortable with your subset of techniques, and stepping out from the closed guard into the dynamic world of the open guard is proving to be a bit overwhelming. You may have learned a number of techniques from the new position but there is only so much time in a class for technique, and rarely enough to craft an in-depth understanding of a position; the fundamentals of maintaining it, the various combinations that can come from it, and the things that must be absolutely avoided. A full hour working on that is usually enough to cover a position and the mechanics of it, and then to give a student a new toolbox to start working on in that new position - allowing the student to expand their game and continue making progress over the next months of training rather than stagnating.



THOSE LOOKING TO REFINE THEIR GAME

This can come in two forms - firstly in a more wide-reaching form where a student is having success with certain techniques or positions, but feels they could be doing them better. Maybe they cannot apply them in certain situations, whether it be to different styles of passing, working on an individual who plays a guard a little differently, or perhaps they simply feel that they are using more energy than they should to make the techniques work. A private class here would be a great opportunity for an instructor to introduce some small tweaks that might have been too detailed for a class atmosphere, whilst at the same time perhaps introducing one or two new techniques that complement the student's existing skillset. Secondly, on a more focused level, there may have been some new techniques introduced in the previous weeks that they are having trouble getting down and would really like to focus some drilling time in ironing out the details to make it easier to integrate them into their regular rolling. All of that said, if you have smaller and simpler questions, your instructor should be happy to answer them after the class. This doesn't mean take half an hour after every session pumping them for knowledge (although there are plenty of instructors who are totally okay with that). But if you require long extended periods of instruction to deal with some of the issues above, maybe private classes are for you.

SO I'VE DECIDED I WANT TO TAKE PRIVATE LESSONS - WHO DO I ASK?

In general, your first port of call should be your head instructor. He will have been watching your progress, and will generally be the most experienced person within your gym. However, that doesn't make him the only option. There is definitely a place for asking another senior training partner instead. Not only will it generally be cheaper, there will be situations where you will benefit more from asking a less experienced training partner who is an expert in a specific position than by asking your instructor

Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

who will have a greater general knowledge but less in-depth knowledge of your subject matter. My rule of thumb for this has always been that I would rather ask a purple belt who was an expert in a position than a black belt who didn't play it all that often. The black belt may play it more effectively but that is often more due to a greater overall competence, not through hours upon hours of focusing on one position or submission. This also extends to body types, where a student might prefer to take classes from a practitioner with a body type or weight closer to their own, rather than someone who may be overall more knowledgeable but will not have the same advantages or limitations as the student in question.

> "IN GENERAL, YOUR FIRST PORT OF CALL SHOULD BE YOUR HEAD INSTRUCTOR. HE WILL HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOUR PROGRESS"

HOW MANY CLASSES SHOULD I DO, AND HOW OFTEN?

You will very rarely want to do more than one private session a week. Leaving aside the financial implications of doing so, you will need time on the mat to work on the techniques you cover in the sessions - there's no point in developing a whole new game over the course of an hour if you have barely had an hour's mat time using it before you are learning something new and breaking new ground. As a minimum, I would say you would want at least three sessions between private classes, which will mean for a relatively frequent practitioner you are limited to once a week - those coming less often may benefit from once a fortnight, or even once a month.

WHAT SHOULD THE CLASSES INCLUDE?

Most of this should be addressed in the 'Who should take private classes?' section above. Going into a private class without any real idea what you want out of it can be risky and make it a lot harder for the instructor to do his job of making your jiu jitsu better. Going into a private class and saying "Can we just roll and then you can tell me what I need to work on?" makes things a lot harder on the instructor because not only does he have less time to make improvements, he will have to develop a structure for the class, and the topics it will cover, on the fly. Whilst there are certainly instructors who are capable of doing that, it can also be more difficult for the student to learn if the teacher highlights a number of disparate issues without a real theme connecting them.

HOW DO I MAXIMISE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MY PRIVATE CLASSES?

Take notes. If you have real problems with remembering things mid class, take them during the class, but if possible try to write down all the topics covered and the important points from them as soon as the class as finished. Even better, try to go through it all again with the instructor and confirm the points as you write them down. An excellent option that most teachers should be okay with is to take five to ten minutes at the end of the session to make a video summarising the key points in the class for your reference. This can be invaluable in terms of taking the material onboard. You have paid for an hour of quality learning, it would be a terrible waste to forget any of it. Also, and this might seem obvious, try to implement the material from the classes. It's very easy to stick to your 'A' game in rolling, but there's no point covering new material and then not testing it, coming back in for another class and when the instructor asks you if you had any problems the honest answer is "Well, I didn't actually try any of it." Finally, don't be afraid to ask the instructor if things come up when you are trying to implement the content from the classes. They should be happy to give you a quick five or ten minute run through, adjustment or refresher to try and set you on a better track as you continue your training.
Private lessons are not for everyone, and by no means essential, but for certain people they can really make a big difference. I hope some of the points here help you to decide whether they are for you and if they are, give you some idea about how to make the most of them. ■

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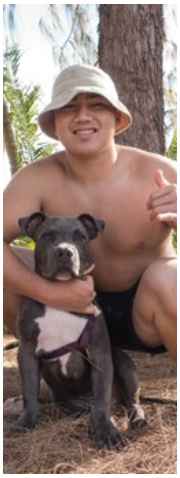
WORDS: BUDO JAKE
PICTURES: BUDO DAVE

WHY GUAM SHOULD BE ON YOUR TRAVEL BUCKET LIST

While most people have heard of Guam, it's not so common to run into someone that's actually been there. I've just got back from my second trip to the tropical paradise and I want to share some of my enthusiasm with you - the BJJ aficionado.

Despite being far away from mainland United States, Guam is an American territory. It's the largest of the Mariana Islands in Micronesia and has much to offer the budding BJJ traveller. Here are the top six reasons Guam should be on your upcoming travel list:

REASON 1: THE WEATHER
As is the case with most tropical locations, the weather in Guam is pretty much ideal. Sure there's a rainy season (July – November) and there's an occasional typhoon, but other than that, you'll be basking in about 80F (27C) temperature with little more than your shorts, a tank top and flip flops.



REASON 2: THE WATER
Now I live on the coast (Southern California) but our water flows down from Alaska and is therefore FRIGID. Most beachgoers and surfers wear wetsuits. Not in Guam where the water is like bathwater year round. Also, the visibility is amazing. Whether you're walking ankle deep on the shore, or out on a boat, the visibility is incredible. Put some goggles on underwater and you'll be blown away by all of the ocean life beaming with colour.

REASON 3: THE LANGUAGE
If you're reading this, I assume you speak English and that makes Guam an easy place to visit. As a territory of the United States (since 1898), English is the official language. Also the currency is the US dollar.

REASON 4: THE PEOPLE
I was born in the Midwest of the US where towns are smaller and people (generally speaking) go out of their way to be friendly. These common courtesy traits are few and far between in most big cities, and fading everywhere else as well. Guam reminds me of small town America. With an area of 210 sq miles (544 km) and 162,000 people, Guam is not too small, but the friendliness of the people makes it feel so. Walk along the beach and you'll often see groups of people barbecuing, playing music, and enjoying the day.

REASON 5: THE FOOD
The fact that Guam has incredible seafood should come as no surprise. Fresh fish, crab, octopus and scallops are all available as sashimi or barbecued. Fresh fruit and vegetables are also bountiful including coconuts, watermelon, mangos and more. One thing you might be surprised about (I certainly was) is the amazing barbecued meat skills that the locals possess. Whether chicken, beef, ribs, or pork, the BBQ on Guam can rival the best BBQ shops of the Southern United States.

REASON 6: THE JIU JITSU
You knew I'd get to the BJJ at some point, didn't you? For a small island, Guam is PACKED with BJJ schools. There are schools affiliated with Purebred, Bonsai, Checkmat, Gracie Barra, Zenith, Carlson Gracie, and others. Not only schools, the island also hosts the Marianas Open, a jiu jitsu tournament open to all belt levels and also includes a black belt open weight invitational. This year marked the incredible 17th instalment of the event with the likes of Felipe Pena, Keenan Cornelius, and others fighting for $15,000 in cash prizes. The tournament is held twice a year and more information can be found at marianasopen.com

Each school on the island has a slightly different vibe. I've visited many of them and honestly I think you'd be happy at any one you chose. For my last visit I trained at Purebred, which happens to be the largest academy on the island with a commanding view of the ocean right from the mats! They offer a wide range of classes including gi, nogi, muay thai and yoga.

After talking to any BJJ student or teacher on the island, you'll find Guamanians to be very passionate about not only their territory but also their jiu jitsu. While you might expect islanders to be laid back and relaxed, I have found that this is only partially true on Guam. Guamanians all have a slow chill vibe (after all, it's a small island, no need to be in a hurry). That being said, they also have fighting in their blood. They experienced violence over the past few centuries with the most recent being during World War II.

The unique qualities of being relaxed but also ready to fight, makes for what I think are excellent

Budo Jake is a black belt under Carlos Gracie Junior, CEO of Budo Videos and host of Rolled Up and This Week In BJJ.

ingredients for a jiu jitsu athlete. During my week at Purebred, I saw (and experienced) many intense rolling sessions but also genuine concern for the wellbeing of their training partners. I don't think you can ask for a better combination than that.

Things to know before you go:

THING 1: THE HUMIDITY
It is a little humid on Guam. If you're not used to this, it can take a day or so to get used to it. The first rolling session I had I was lightheaded and exhausted. Be sure to stay hydrated and give your body some time to adapt.

THING 2: THE GYM
Contact a gym ahead of time, it's just common courtesy. If you contact a gym beforehand and let them know you'd like to train, chances are you'll be treated much better than if you just show up unannounced.

THING 3: THE ACCOMMODATION
Accommodation is largely a matter of personal preference. For myself, I try to stay as far away from the tourist spots as possible. Instead of hotels, I prefer to stay at Air BNBs, which are operated by individuals, rather than cold and strict corporations. I've always had a great time staying at Air BNBs and Guam has them as well. Now if you are travelling with a spouse or family who may prefer to see the touristy stuff, then the area known as Tumon will be your place.

THING 4: GETTING AROUND
Guam's not too big, but depending on what you want to do, having a car can be a big help. Consider renting a car at the airport. Driving is easy (as long as you're comfortable driving on the right) and drivers are not nearly as aggressive as they are in my neck of the woods (Southern California).

THE BOTTOM LINE
If you like tropical locations, clean warm water, nice people, delicious food and great BJJ, you can't go wrong with Guam. There is an episode of Rolled Up that we filmed for my first visit and we're preparing another episode on Guam now. Check the Budovideos YouTube channel for that soon. ■

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WORDS: MATT JARDINE
PICTURES: FELIX RODRIGUEZ

THE DEATH OF THE CREONTE

Creonte: a pejorative I've only ever heard spat in disdain. The only other words I know that carry the same venomous intent I was banned from using as a child.

Internecine and emotive, it is a term entangled with disharmony and separation. At the root of the animosity lies the defence of core Martial Arts ethics: loyalty, integrity, respect and honour.

In this article we will delve into 'Creontism' and ask if it really is as disrespectful as traditionalists like to suggest and investigate whether, actually, it could well be what your jiu jitsu needs.

MANDALA - THE BIRTH OF CREONTE

Let us first look to the etymology of the word for background insight. 'Creon' was originally a figure in Greek Mythology best known as the ruler of Thebes in the legend of Oedipus. In the late 1980s, a Brazilian television remake of the legend renamed 'Creon', '*Creonte*', in a soap opera spin on the original.

In this modern take, Creonte demonstrates the negative character traits of treachery, narcissism, hypocrisy and inconsistency - turning face and decision at the drop of a hat in order to meet his own needs. The 80s soap is said to have been a favourite of the late Grandmaster Carlson Gracie to whom the coining of this BJJ term is attributed; a term that suggests disloyalty and disregard from a student who either switches academies or takes classes in more than one at the same time.

CONSIDERATE BRUTALITY

Ironically, almost every martial art and fighting system likes to adhere its followers to some sort of 'ethical code': Chinese martial arts follow the Wu De; Bushido governs the Japanese; Knights of old studied the Code of Chivalry and even modern, real, warfare is governed by the laws of war. Visit any good quality BJJ academy and you will find a notice board with the schools own adapted or inherited version.

The aforementioned qualities of loyalty, integrity, respect and honour under-pin each and every one of these codes, and with the right intention they are indeed admirable, defendable and something to strive for. But, as history has shown time and again, often those insisting on such qualities from others do not do so from a place of altruism but from a place of egotistic gratification. Leaders, not yet themselves enlightened by their codes own lofty heights, instead use it to lord power over unaware devotees.

Needless to say, this is not true in all cases, but observed enough to warrant inclusion here, and it is here where waters are easily muddied and for 'Creontes' to be labelled unfairly by so called 'leaders'.

THE 'DEATH TOUCH'

No doubt many of us have laughed and scoffed at YouTube videos of Martial Arts Masters throwing their students without touching them - some of us adding scathing remarks amongst forums of critics who are dumbfounded by the ludicrousness of such scenes. On closer investigation though, aren't the students being thrown merely victims of loyalty, integrity, respect and honour (for their teacher) taken to the furthest extremes? Are we not all equally on a similar path by unquestioningly putting our trust and faith in our instructors and academies; buying into a club ethos that subtly suggests it has the best way of 'doing BJJ'?

TRIBALISM AND BJJ

If you sit at the back of a BJJ tournament and just observe, you will see a perfect example of modern day tribalism. More in depth than can be fully covered here, instead here is a short but academic description of tribalism:

'*Tribalism is the state of being organised in, or advocation for, a tribe or tribes. In terms of conformity, tribalism may also refer in popular culture terms to a way of thinking or behaving in which people are more loyal to their tribe than to their friends, their country, or any other social group.*'

The only thing needed to be added to this explanation to make it almost entirely applicable to BJJ is that the 'tribal member must also wear its academy's patch'!

Tribalism in and of itself, is not a bad thing, in fact the strength of a cohesive group can ensure its long term survival. But a tribe is only as strong or as weak as its leader - its 'figure-head', and many lives have been damaged by poor leadership; leaders who expect unquestioned loyalty.

THE 'QUIET AMERICAN', BUDDHA AND SCIENCE

In 1955, in his anti-colonial novel '*The Quiet American*', author Graham Greene writes that 'Innocence is a kind of insanity'; a suggestion in these six words that unfaltering loyalty and trust can lead to our downfall.

To safeguard against such cultish following, our western lives are mostly governed by the 'scientific method'. Central to this way is that 'all evidence must be empirical [based on evidence]' and that 'hypotheses can be proved or disproved using observation and experiment'.

It is said that even the Buddha encouraged his followers to question and fully think through what he had taught them. Whether or not this is true cannot be empirically confirmed, but the fact remains that this principle stands as a key tenet of Buddhism to this day- a positive thing indeed - and we would all be wise to add the same faculties of discretion to our own experiences.

TIGHTROPES AND FINE LINES

Understanding that we may be possibly walking toward a dead end need not fill us with despondency however; this realisation merely makes us walk the tightrope eyes open and awake- now more capable of discernment.

With such awareness we can honour the Martial Arts' ideals (loyalty, integrity, respect and honour) without losing ourselves by crossing the line into unconsidered camaraderie for a group whose leader may not be the positive guiding light we at first imagined.

But how can we tell? How can we distinguish if the environment we have committed our time, money and efforts to really has our best interests at heart? This is where being a 'Creonte' may very well help.

POOR LEADER, GREAT LEADER

The greatest Martial Arts leaders I have ever studied under have all demonstrated the same characteristics as the worst, but at opposing ends of a spectrum. Some of these are: self-confidence - in their own skills and teaching abilities; humility; and a genuine concern for their students' best interests.

My worst teachers 'banned' me from training at other schools; they told me -a lot- that 'other schools and styles are inferior, know nothing, and are a disgrace to the martial arts.'

My best teachers either supported or encouraged cross club/academy information exchange. They themselves could be witnessed openly sharing ideas and ideals with others, both teachers and students. They never demanded respect and loyalty but always received it in abundance. The only integrity and honour they asked for was not for themselves but for fellow students and for ourselves.

The very best teachers seemingly need not use the disparaging term 'Creonte', understanding that a student has both the right, and the need sometimes, to practise elsewhere. For a student who is showing genuine disloyalty, dishonour and self-serving disrespect, the very best use their humility, experience and compassion to gently guide the troubled charge to better ways; or gently release those that cannot be rehabilitated from the academy- no malice, no violence, just an acceptance that the timing is not right for this particular student to be helped.

These insights were born only by comparative analysis - comparing one thing against another. It is only in this way that realisation, understanding and conclusion can be attained. At the very least, a 'Creonte' has the benefit of such multi-faceted observation.

WHEN NEEDS MUST

Comparative analysis aside, others still need to train in different academies as a simple solution to their geographical needs and time constraints.

One student I interviewed lives in Hertfordshire, some 30 miles from his London based academy.

An early morning drive to make a 7.30am early risers class will take him roughly an hour - the same drive during rush hour, to make an evening class, could take as much as two or more. With a full time job, a young family and his own sanity to keep intact, it is understandable that he has taken to replacing the evening sessions at his own academy with a lunch time session from another group who offer classes in the basement of his workplace.

Now doubling his training (mornings at his 'home' club, and afternoons at his 'work' one) is it right to tag him a 'Creonte', or an intelligent and dedicated man managing a limited schedule?

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Another student at another academy told me: 'I really love my teacher- I have a lot of respect for him and I enjoy his classes immensely. But, the only thing is, I often cannot make what he teaches me work. He is a six foot beast, I'm a skinny primary school teacher, and I just don't think our bodies speak the same language.

"He inspires me, motivates me, supports me and I love him, but I have to go elsewhere to get tips from someone who is a little more my size. I feel bad, I don't want to be disloyal but I want to get better too…' she says.

Once again we face a student who on paper meets the criteria of a Creonte, but in reality is as far from it as you can get.

THE DEATH OF THE CREONTE

BJJ has come a long way in myriad forms since its early days, its early founders, and its early roots. Things are different in the here and now. And just as we have evolved and let go of techniques and tactics that no longer serve us in this modern era of BJJ, it may be beneficial to let go of some of the outdated ethos and phrases that still taint and shadow this great art; an art that is meant to show gentleness, subtly, respect, honour, manners and compassion.

So maybe it is time to rise above the school yard name calling of 'Creonte'. Maybe it is time to transcend the childish ways of egotistic dominance, mud-slinging and ownership over another.

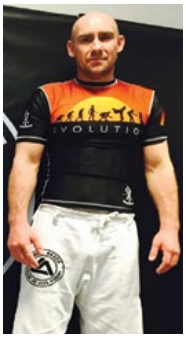
Maybe it is time to place our attention on our own self growth and ethical maturity, letting others live-and-let-live and honouring that we are all just doing the very best we can with the hands that we have been dealt from life.

Maybe it is also time to recognise that others may not reach the heights that we have set ourselves, but instead choosing to feel compassion for them rather than disregard.

It is very likely, as we move from our insistence of honour, respect, loyalty and integrity -as we let go of our own need for it - that the very reward will be honour, respect, loyalty and integrity -no longer needing it but gaining it all the same.

As Nanny Mcphee says in the family film of the same name, 'When you need me, but do not want me, then I will stay. When you want me, but do not need me, then I have to go.' (Not a BJJ quote - of that I am aware, but you have to watch something in your spare time, right?)

This is one of life's greatest paradoxes and how often life is like this… ■



Matt Jardine is a full time teacher of the Martial Arts, writer and author. His new puppy, Smudge, has made the editing of this piece extremely difficult-she lays on his computer keyboard. Sometimes the words look likxjsbx cdwugcr fv mzfxlac FG GFUEGF WNDSFf

WORDS: SAM JOSEPH
PICTURES: KINYA HASHIMOTO

TRUTHS I WOULD SHARE WITH BJJ NEWBIE ME

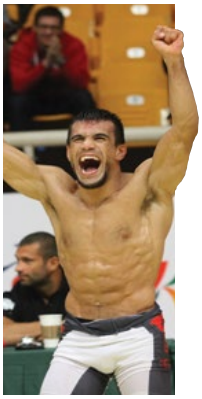
One of the most common things to find after a BJJ class is the exchanging of ideas and techniques.

These interactions take the form of socialising, counselling sessions, positional studies and simple sparring. Naturally, the senior students at the academy are usually the ones imparting the knowledge and advice as their greater experience and proficiency in BJJ lends itself to the role of teacher in this dynamic. As the head instructor of Buckhead Jiu Jitsu, watching this play out on a daily basis inspired me to think of what words of encouragement and nuggets of truth I would share if I could speak to myself during my white and blue belt days. These are the ones I feel would have benefited me the most in my BJJ journey!

EVERYONE WANTS TO QUIT SOMETIMES!

Learning BJJ is hard and gaining any real level of proficiency takes work. Due to the fact that we are participating in a combat sport, the feedback we receive from sparring or competition often involves tapping or losing. This is especially true when we start our journey and when we seek to challenge ourselves by engaging with tougher training partners or going to tournaments. There are also times when we plateau or even feel like we are regressing. These times are especially discouraging, as we do not feel like we are getting any return on our investment of sweat and effort. There are other times when life simply "gets in the way". A new job, travel commitments and/or family obligations can all conspire to take us away from the mat and inadvertently dampen our enthusiasm at the prospect of returning. Our disillusionment can be exacerbated when we see training partners passing us by as we go through these struggles.

I am reminded of one of my first tournaments at purple belt. I had some success at blue belt and fully expected to pick up where I left off even though I had ascended a level of competition. Things did not go as planned, as I had my game completely shut down in a way that made me question whether I had gone as far as I could go in BJJ. While that obviously was not true, in the moment I could only see failure and frustration. Fortunately for me, I had a coach in Mario Yamasaki and training partners who teamed up to force-feed me some perspective and I was back in the gym that next Monday making improvements and setting the stage for future victories.



When I was in my first couple of years of training, I had to deal with a few of these situations and they weighed heavily on my mind. At the time, I believed that my feelings of doubt about wanting to continue were a sign of weakness on my part so I kept them to myself. Years later, I came to realise that not only were my feelings fairly common but I would have benefited greatly from sharing them with teammates and allowing them to support me during those times. The earlier we embrace the fact that everyone deals with frustration or wanting to quit at times, the better off we are as we allow our support group to help us through these times and pave our own paths to happiness and success in BJJ.

EVERYONE GETS NERVOUS AND SCARED!

Though I have never met him, Keenan Cornelius (Atos) is one of my favorite BJJ athletes. Keenan burst on the scene as a purple belt winning the IBJJF Grand Slam (division and absolute at the Pan, European and World Championships). His success continued at the brown belt level and he is now one of the most exciting black belt competitors in our sport. Keenan is excellent from the top and bottom, competes often and routinely takes on the challenge that the Absolute Division presents. Keenan, undoubtedly, is one of the bright lights of BJJ in both gi and nogi.

While I respect all of these accomplishments

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.

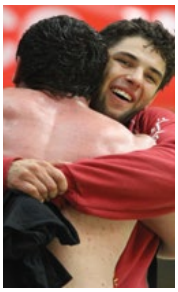
"THE EARLIER WE EMBRACE THE FACT THAT EVERYONE DEALS WITH FRUSTRATION OR WANTING TO QUIT AT TIMES, THE BETTER OFF WE ARE"

and characteristics, they are not the reason I will almost always stop what I am doing to watch when Keenan is on the mat. Reading an article where Keenan discussed his approach to and views on competition, I was struck by how open he was about his intense nervousness when competing. When I read that he got physically sick before many of the triumphs I thought he took for granted, I felt a kinship with this athlete I had never met. As strange as it may sound, I immediately felt better about my own "pre-competition jitters". My reasoning was, "If THAT GUY (as GREAT as he is) gets nervous, of course I will be nervous…and that is okay". This was an epiphany that facilitated my participation in and enjoyment of tournaments. Now, in my academy one of my most quoted sayings is, "Everyone gets scared and nervous…it's what we do with it that separates us. Now, go out and have some fun".

VERY FEW PEOPLE FEEL "GOOD ENOUGH"!

Along the same lines is the common self-doubt that comes with a new belt promotion. We often feel like we are starting all over when we reach a new belt level. We go from being the most experienced at one level to being the newbie in one swift moment. A few adjust very quickly and do not skip a beat but most of us need an adjustment period that can vary in length and degree of difficulty. The expectations also change with the belt colours. Not much is expected from the white belts in comparison to blue belts and especially purple belts and above. That weight of expectation can make us question if we are even deserving of the new rank.

What most of us fail to understand is that we are not alone in struggling as we deal with this transition. Almost everyone, no matter how talented, goes through some rocky times after being promoted. When we feel this way, we must resist the temptation to ignore the progress that got us the promotion in the first place. Actively acknowledging that growth can help us manage our feelings as we navigate the tough times and keep us afloat.



YOU WILL COME TO VALUE YOUR "ACADEMY RIVALS".

Many of us have training partners we compete a little more "aggressively" against. Sometimes it is because we started at the same time, we are the same size or because our games just match up in way that we are consistently paired during sparring. I call these "academy rivalries". Academy rivalries can range from very friendly to almost antagonistic in nature.

Noah Booth, now a Leo Dalla black belt, was the first person I sparred with when I moved to Washington DC and the Yamasaki Academy. Noah welcomed me with the aggressive, "no-measure given" roll that I would come to expect and experience over our four years training together. Most days, I welcomed and enjoyed the challenge. Some days I resented it as I just wanted to "flow" or I did not feel my best.

It was not until years later, long after we stopped training together, that I fully appreciated how much Noah helped me. By consistently coming at me with his best, Noah had a big part in making me better and therefore shared and continues to share in my success.

The trick is in understanding that the practice mat is all about preparation. It prepares us for the challenges we face in reaching our goals - whether they are tournaments, simply advancing our games or even off the mat. When we fully embrace this, we see our "rivals" as the "teammates" they truly are and our relationships with them can blossom.

CONCLUSION

These are the most impactful things I wish I could go back in time to my early BJJ days and share with myself. Take them to heart and allow them to help keep your BJJ journey moving forward and on-track. See you on the mat! ■

MASTERCLASS

LUCIO LAGARTO

Lucio ‘Lagarto’ Rodrigues is a black belt under Carlos Gracie Jr and an Abu Dhabi World Pro black belt champion. Based in the UK, Lagarto is one of the most decorated jiu jitsu athletes in Europe, and is also known for battling cancer before returning to compete at the highest level.

Pictures: Callum Medcraft

In this rendition of Masterclass, Lagarto demonstrates a series of sweeps and submissions from a de la Riva guard with lapel control.

1/2/3: Starting from de la Riva, start to open your opponent's right lapel and pass it under your leg and their leg.

4: Often your opponent will stand up and look to pass from there, which sets up a sweep.

5: Bring your right foot onto your opponent's hip, pull them towards you by their right lapel and shoot your hips underneath them to lift them off the mat.

6/7/8: Sweep them overhead so that their back lands on the mat.

9: Release your grip on your opponent's lapel and grab their trousers.

10/11/12: Bring your left shin behind your opponent's right leg and use these grips to move them to their right, arriving in a leg drag pass.

1: Starting in de la Riva with control of your opponent's right lapel underneath your left leg.

2/3: Place your right foot on their bicep and stretch it out until they fall onto their left elbow.

4/5: From here, release your grip of your opponent's lapel and shoot your hips and legs upwards to attack with a triangle.

6/7/8: Adjust your triangle and finish the submission.

DE LA RIVA TO KNEE BAR

1: Starting in de la Riva with control of your opponent's right lapel underneath your left leg.

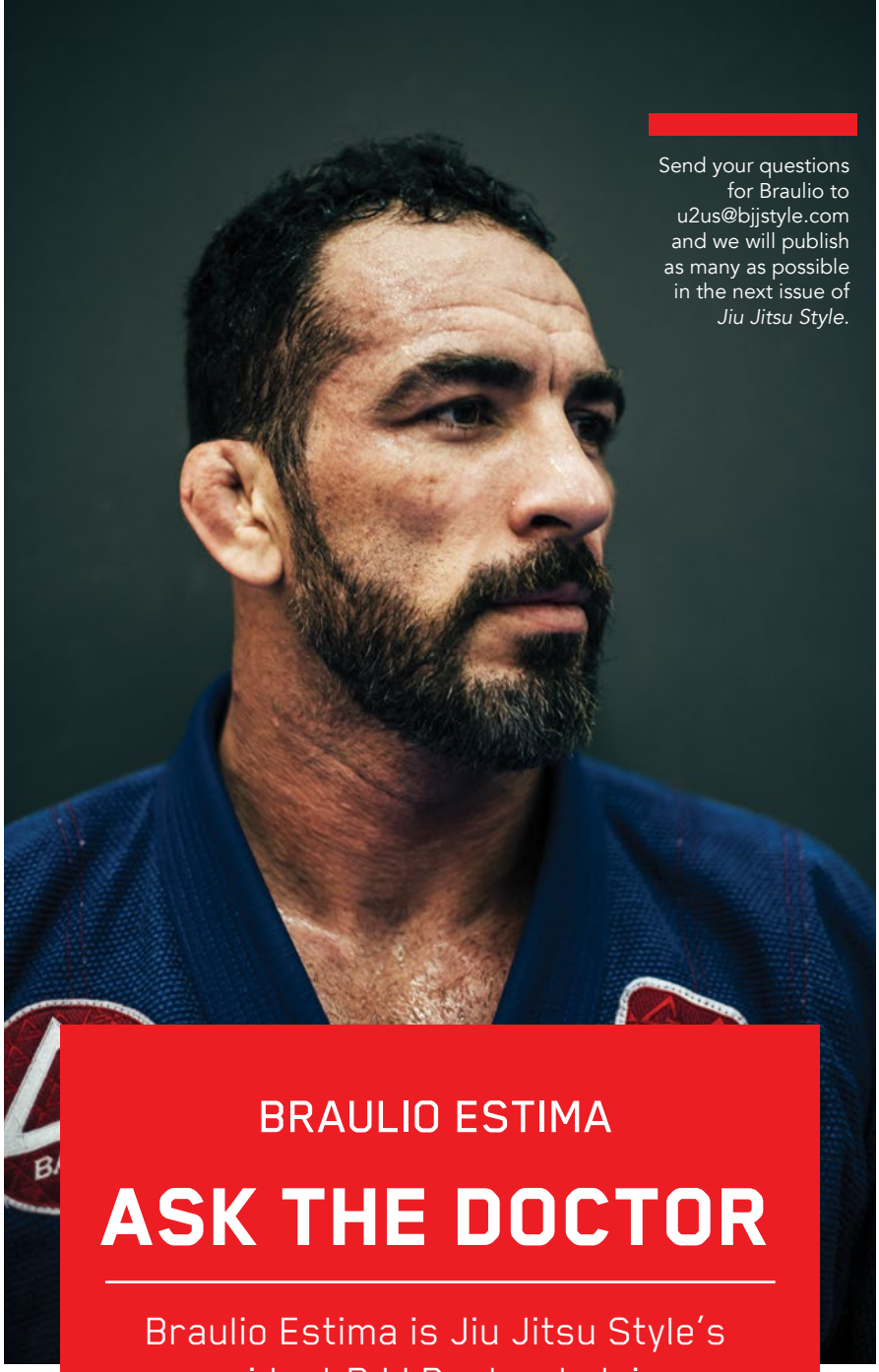
2/3: Your opponent looks to pass by controlling your right foot and putting it between their legs, at the same time stepping out to their left.

4/5/6: From here, switch your grip of your opponent's lapel from your left to right hand.

7: Always maintain distance at this stage with your left hand on your opponent's chest or your left foot on their hip.

8/9/10: Grab your opponent's trousers with your left hand and use a pendulum motion to spin all the way around so that your right knee is on the back of their knee.

11/12: From here there's a very sneaky leg lock that puts pressure on the back of your opponent's knee. Curl your right leg down, while lifting your left leg up and pulling your lapel grip down to the floor.



Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com and we will publish as many as possible in the next issue of *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

BRAULIO ESTIMA

ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game.

Hey Braulio,
If you had to organise what you think would be the most entertaining jiu jitsu event, one that would sell the most tickets and pay-per-views, how would it shape up? I guess most importantly, what match-ups would you love to see that perhaps haven't been seen yet?

Best wishes - Carol

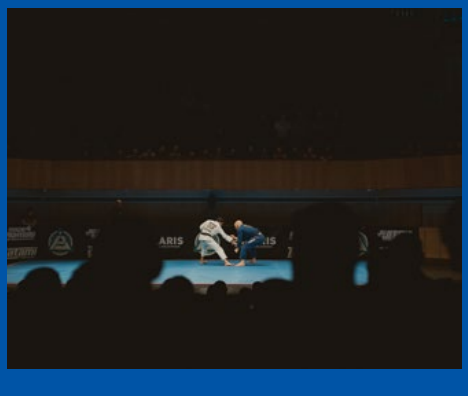
Hi Carol
This is a fun question! Ok, so just thinking now, here are some of my thoughts on this, but we are just brainstorming here.

There are no perfect rules, but I think the concept of submission only wouldn't be what I'd go for specifically. Sub only is good in a way, but I think it prevents people from opening up because there are fewer rewards for dominant positioning. I also don't like the idea of doing, say, 10 minutes no points and then five minutes at the end with points, because that just sets up a boring first 10 minutes.

So I would have points in my event from the beginning to encourage activity and it will also always give us a winner. I really think that having points from the beginning will encourage more submissions. I think 15 minutes is a good length of a match for a fight to properly play out as well. I also believe penalties are important to have in the rules to encourage activity and less stalling.

It would be cool to see a more raw venue and fight area. I like the idea of having cameras inside a matted area that also has matted walls, so the fighters can use the walls no problem – basically no restarts. I think that would be pretty cool as a spectacle and it would also open up more opportunities when fighting against the walls.

In terms of match-ups, I'd love to see matches like Rafa Mendes vs Marcelo Garcia, Roger Gracie vs Marcus Buchecha, and Erberth Santos vs Rodolfo Vieira. Most importantly, with the matchmaking, I think is good to make sure to pick guys with different styles, so a good passer against a good guard player for example.

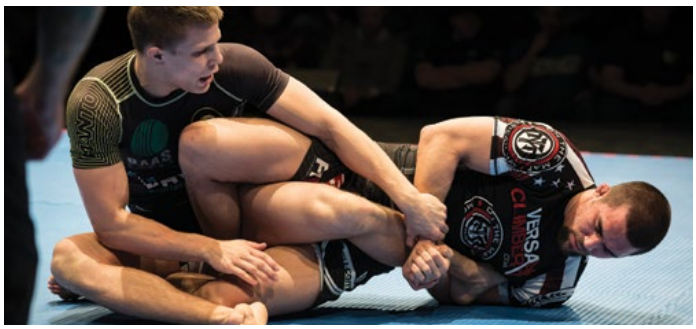


Hi Braulio,
It seems that leg locks are really fashionable at the moment, with the guys at Renzo Gracie New York and 10th Planet Jiu Jitsu leading the way. I can't help but think though that there's too much emphasis now on the leg lock game for some people – what do you think? I know it's all part of jiu jitsu, but I can't help but feel that people are ignoring the stuff like passing the guard nowadays. I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Many thanks - Cory

Hi Cory,
Well, let's not generalise this jiu jitsu generation down to just a handful of guys fighting a particular way. I think people are talking about leg locks so much, particularly heel hooks, because they are not something everyone knows how to handle and they can be annoying to escape. It's the same as people complaining about getting wrist locked. In my eyes, I'd have heel hooks allowed at black belt events and I think every submission should be treated the same way.

Basically, I don't think there's too much emphasis being placed on leg locks or leg lockers. It's another cool aspect of jiu jitsu, and I think there's going to be people choosing to train more specifically with those types of attacks in mind. Whatever works for you is cool.



50/50 GUARD ESCAPE

Hi Braulio,
I'm trying to be open-minded about 50/50, but it's hard! If I get caught in the position, I really feel like it's impossible to get out of it. Would you mind showing a decent escape that works well for you?

- Charles

Hi Charles,
This is an escape that I've been doing for years, so it works very well.

1. First of all, if you're escaping you always want to be the person whose leg is on the bottom, as pictured. 2/3/4. Reach back with your right hand and grip your opponent's left leg as you stand up to open the guard. 5/6: As soon as you're standing up, push your opponent's right leg all the way to the floor in front of your right shin. 7/8/9: Grip your opponent's collar and knee slice through to side control.

Hi Braulio,
I am substantially bigger than most of the people who train at my gym, in fact there's literally no-one within 15kg of me. I weigh around 95kg, so I'm not that big – just lots of small technical guys at my place! Would you have any advice as to how to approach my training, as I can't help but feel like I struggle with my development because my weight plays a part?

Cheers - ***Jono***

Hi Jono
Usually in these situations, where you either have a big size or skill advantage compared to all your training partners, I'd recommend using lots of specific training. Try to use as little power as possible, because we know if you use too much power your technique will not develop like it could. This is easier said than done, but it can be done and it's something that I have had to deal with in my career, as I have often trained with guys of a lower level.

It's also important to use this as an opportunity to explore techniques and try new things as much as possible. It must be said that you should try to make an effort to find someone your own weight to train with at least once a month, but there are definitely ways to make your training better without doing this.

Half Guard Sweep

Hi Braulio,
Do you have any escapes/ sweeps/submissions you hit from half guard bottom when the guy has head control and has flattened you out?

Thank you - *George*

Hi George,
That can be tough – see if this sweep works for you.

1. You are on the bottom in half guard and your opponent has control of your head, limiting your movement. 2. Control your opponent's trouser with your right hand. 3. Switch the angle of your hips, getting ready for the next movement. 4/5/6. In a powerful motion, bridge as high as you can, using your left arm to push your opponent towards the right. Make sure you keep a grip of your opponent's left trouser with your right hand to prevent them from basing, and arrive on top.

Sit Up Guard Sweep to Back Take

Hey Braulio,
II really like using the sit-up guard, but I don't think I'm doing anything too technical from there (lots of wrestling). Can you show a nice, technical sweep to hit from that position?

- Mark

Hi Mark
This is a nice option to take the back.

1. You are in sit-up guard and have established shin-to-shin contact. 2/3/4. Feed your opponent's right lapel under their own leg and secure control. 5/6. Gain control of your opponent's right sleeve and start to fall towards your right shoulder. 7/8: Maintain your grips and extend your left shin to make your opponent post in front of you. 9: Place your right hand on your opponent's elbow to prevent them from coming back towards you. 10/11/12: Sit up and arrive on your opponent's back before inserting a hook and securing the seat belt grip.

In this issue, Marcos showcases some of his favourite submission attacks from side control.

SHEDDING THE GI

MARCOS TINOCO

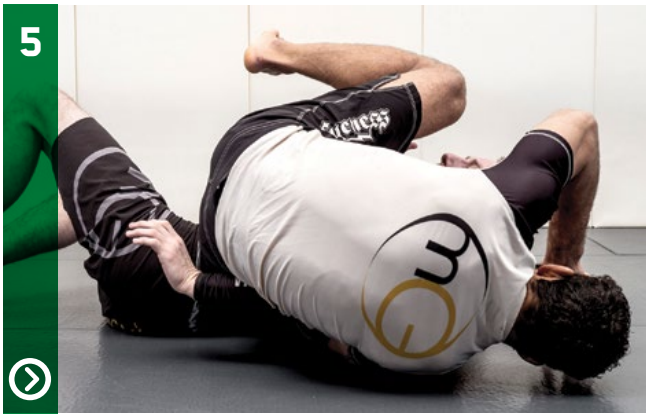
Our instructor for this issue's instalment of 'Shedding the Gi' is Marcelo Garcia black belt, Marcos Tinoco! Marcos is part of a group of talented fighters based at Garcia's academy in New York, and is a brown belt world champion and 2015 Pan American nogi world champion.

Pictures: Ric Ricard

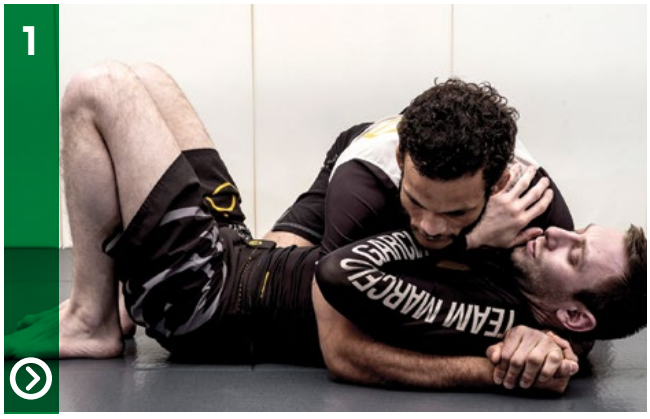
1: You have secured side control.

2/3: Your opponent makes a big bridge motion and manages to regain an underhook with their left arm. As soon as they start to regain their underhook, step your right leg over their body and secure their arm at the elbow.

4/5/6/7: Drop your weight on your opponent's arm, hug your own leg and roll through into an omoplata.

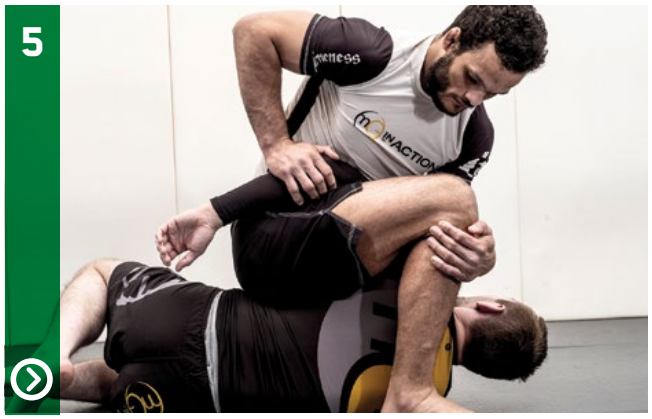


8: Reach for your opponent's far shoulder and sit up to finish the submission.

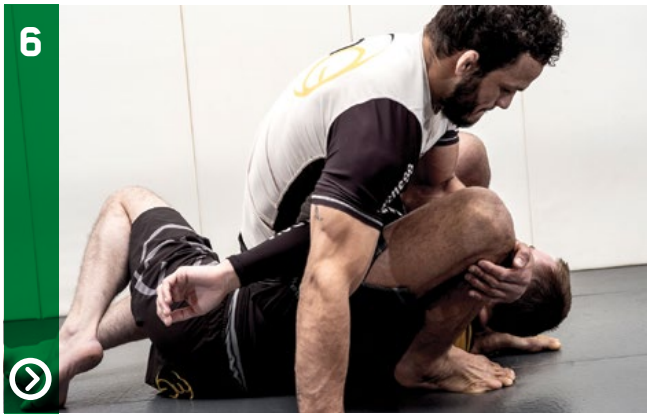


1: You have secured side control.

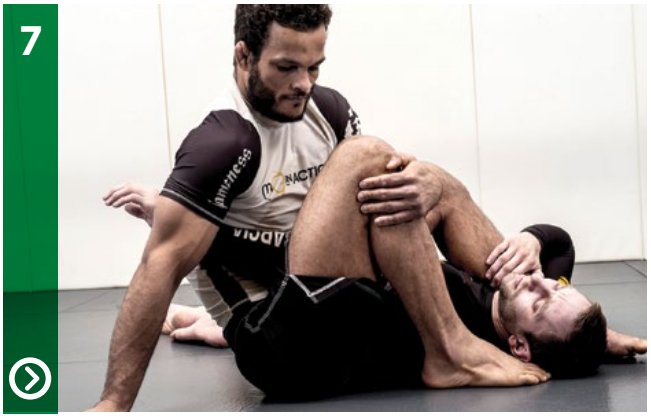
2/3/4: Your opponent makes a big bridge motion and manages to regain an underhook with their left arm. As soon as they start to regain their underhook, step your right leg over their body and secure their arm at the elbow.



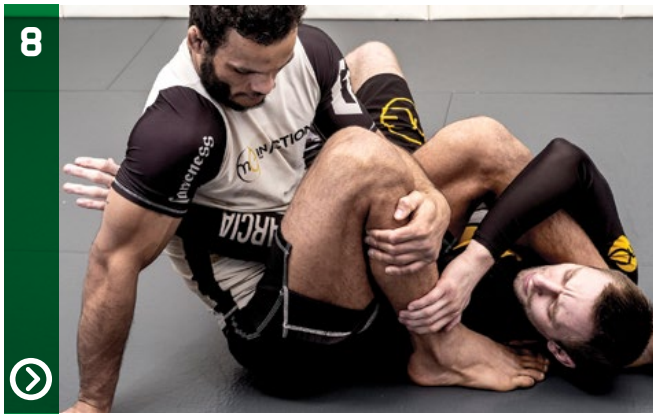
5: Keep control of your right knee with your left hand.



6: Switch your weight towards your right and post on the mat with your right hand.



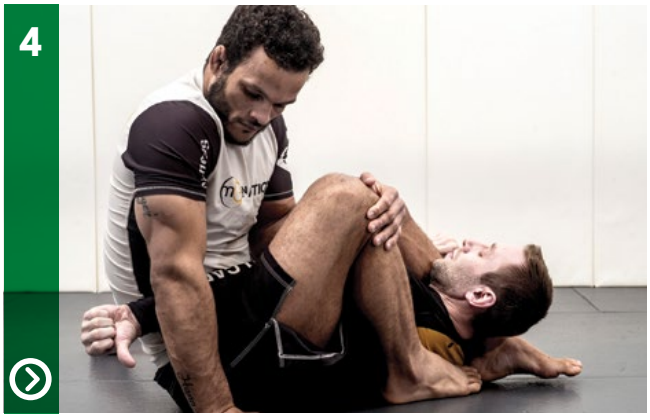
7: As you sit on the mat, keep your right knee tight to your chest with your left hand.



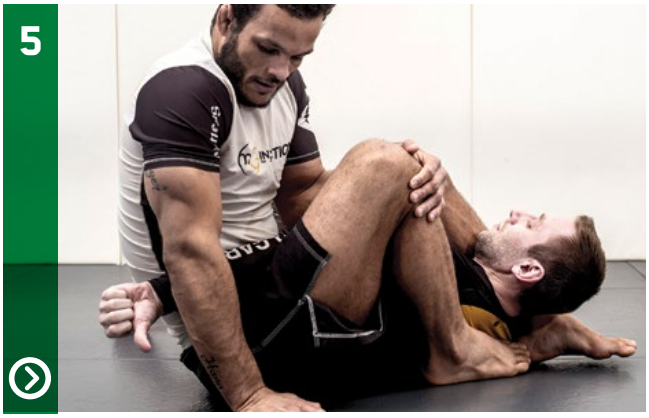
8: The detail with the finish here is when your opponent has their thumb facing towards the ceiling. Make sure to keep bringing your right knee towards your chest as you shift your opponent's arm downwards with your right armpit.

1: You have secured side control.

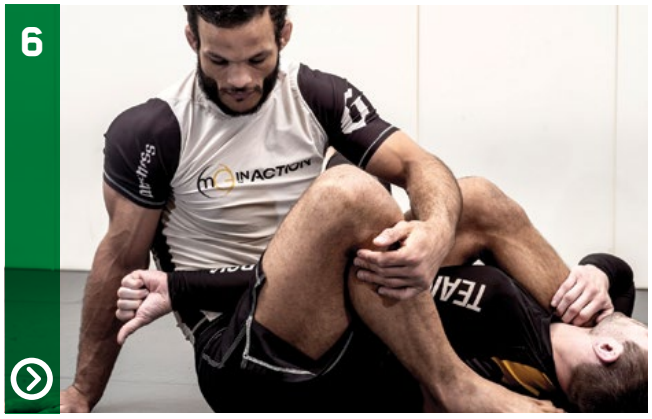
2/3: Your opponent makes a big bridge motion and manages to regain an underhook with their left arm. As soon as they start to regain their underhook, step your right leg over their body and secure their arm at the elbow.



4: Keep control of your right knee with your left hand.



5: Switch your weight towards your right and post on the mat with your right hand.

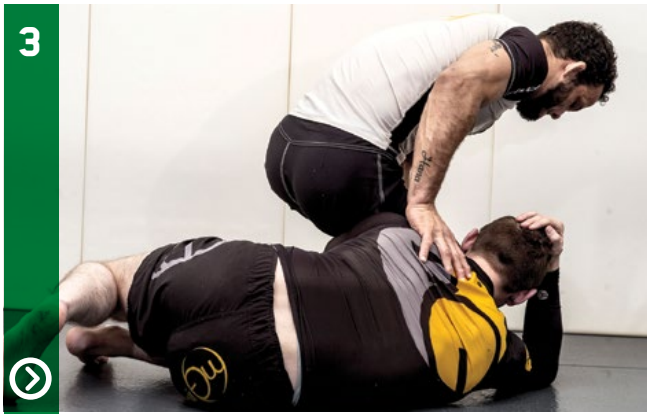


6: Your opponent attempts to alleviate the pressure on their elbow joint by twisting their wrist and pointing their thumb towards the mat.

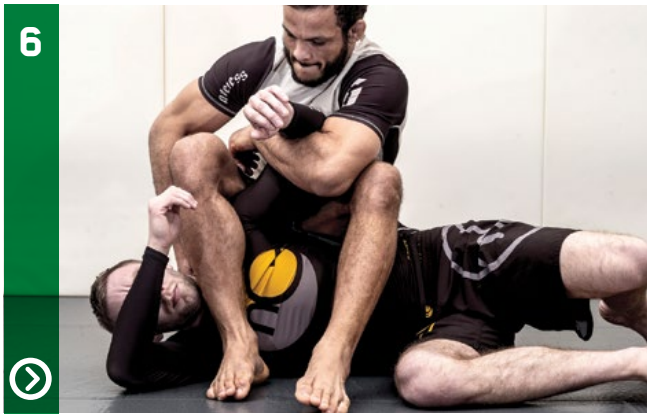
7/8: Release your right knee and use both hands to control your opponent's wrist, sitting back to finish with a regular armbar.

1: You have secured side control.

2/3: Your opponent makes a big bridge motion and manages to regain an underhook with their left arm and starts to hug your right leg.



4/5/6: In a fluid motion, sit backwards into your opponent and secure their left arm with your own left arm.



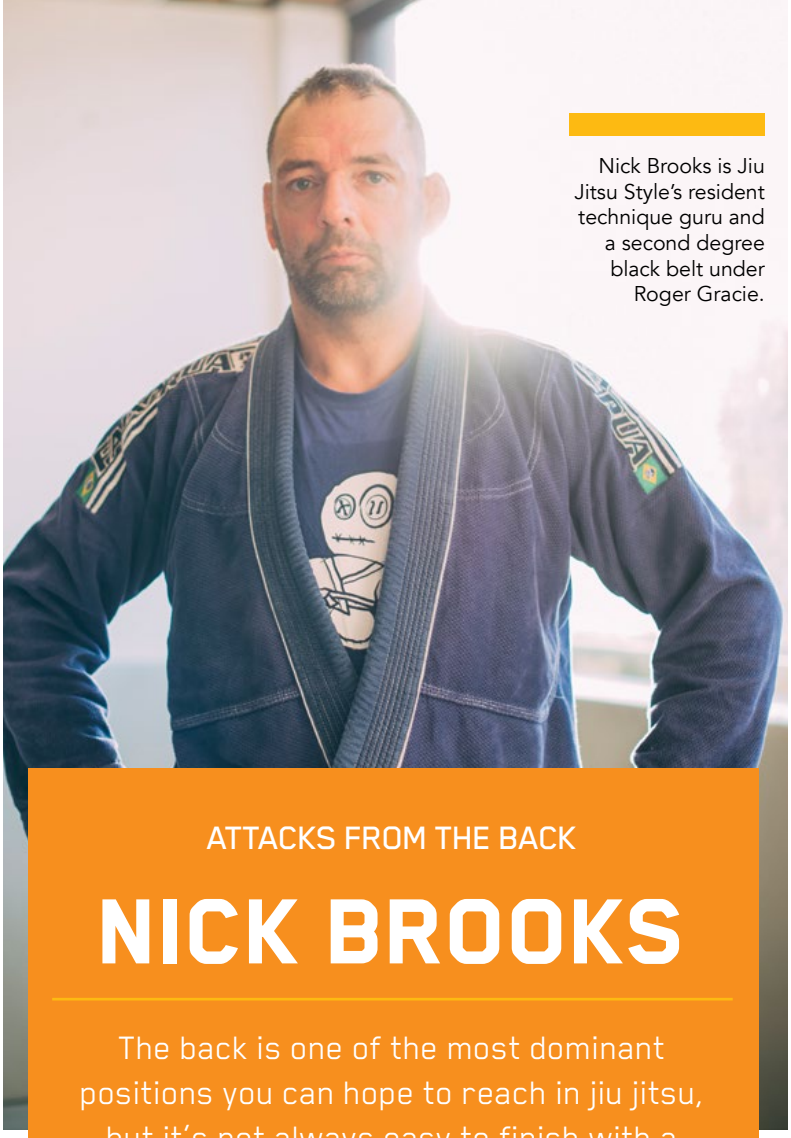
7/8: From here, you can safely transition back into a straight armbar.

1: You have established side control and your opponent is keeping their arms tight in a defensive position.

2: Bring your right arm over your opponent's head so that your forearm is now behind their neck.

3/4: As soon as you move your right arm, start to shift your weight and transition into north south position.

5/6: Connect your hands behind your opponent's neck, drop your hips to the mat and your shoulder down across their neck to apply the choking pressure.



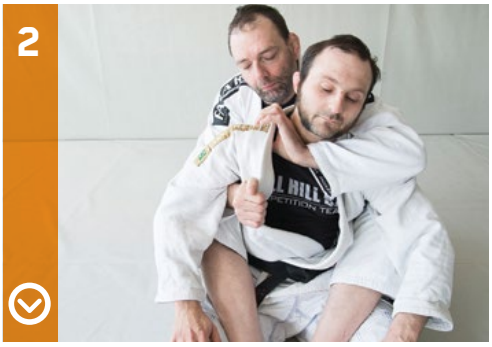
Nick Brooks is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident technique guru and a second degree black belt under Roger Gracie.

ATTACKS FROM THE BACK

NICK BROOKS

The back is one of the most dominant positions you can hope to reach in jiu jitsu, but it's not always easy to finish with a submission from there. Here's a selection of slightly unorthodox submissions that I like to use – see how you get on!

1: You are on your opponent's back with both hooks in and a seat belt grip.



2: Open your opponent's lapel to attack with a choke from the back.

3/4: Often your opponent defends by pulling their lapel away from their neck.

5/6: To counter, open your own collar and put your hand in to create a choking grip. Next, reach down and grab your opponent's knee.

7: Turn to create an angle and finish the choke the same as you would with a bow and arrow choke

1: You are on your opponent's back and have secured both hooks, but they are defending the choke really well.

2: Slide your hand between your opponent's wrist and bicep as pictured.

3: Reach down and grab your opponent's trouser leg, keeping your elbow tight to your hip to trap their whole arm.

4/5/6: Keep turning your body and bring your thigh against your opponent's body, before finally passing your leg over their head to attack the arm bar.

1: You are on your opponent's back with both hooks in and a seat belt grip.

2: Pass your own lapel under your opponent's armpit.

3: Pass your lapel to your other hand, gripping palm down.

4/5/6: Control your opponent's knee and turn your body as you would for a bow and arrow choke. Finally, pass your leg over their head to apply more leverage for the choke.

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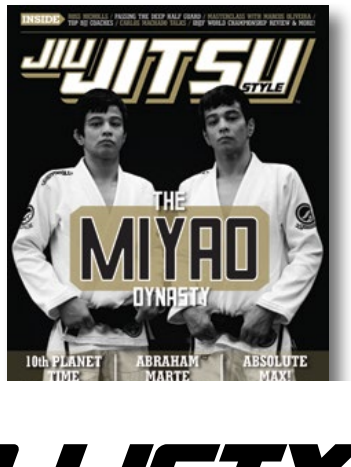

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1: You are on your opponent's back with both hooks in and a seat belt grip.

2: You start to attack the neck with a cross collar choke from the back, but you will often find this can be hard to finish as the angle is not ideal.

3/4: Once you know the choke is tight, but you just need some further leverage, remove your bottom hook and place your top hook behind your opponent's knee.

5/6: You manoeuvre off your opponent's back and place your knee against their body. Posture up to add more leverage and power to the choke.

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MIKE LENG

GAINING WEIGHT PROPERLY & 'GO TO' SUPPLEMENTS FOR BJJ

Welcome to another session where I answer your questions on nutrition!

"The most important thing when choosing food for yourself is to make sure that everything you choose is nutritionally dense and fits with your goals"

We had some really good ones sent in this issue and it was really tough to choose just a couple of people to help! Every month I see more and more people getting confused by nutrition and how to structure it specifically for grappling. Either all the advice out there seems to be aimed at body builders, or everything seems to contradict everything else!

As always, if you are looking to get a better understanding of nutrition, then I highly recommend speaking to your coach or a professional about having a plan set up for your individual needs. Consulting your doctor before undertaking any kind of new nutrition plan is also heavily advised.

Many people have a terrible experience when it comes to nutrition as they simply don't know what they are doing, and it's not their fault. There are that many schools of thought out there that often contradict each other - who isn't going to get confused! Where do you start? Do you fast? Do you carb cycle? Do you have cheats? Do you only eat fruit that has been picked by a female unicorn under the light of a full moon?

The list of confusing topics is endless.

Not only does it seem that setting up a nutrition plan causes people problems, but then adjusting that plan or tailoring it to your own individual needs keeps tripping people up!

So I'm here to help. Here are a few that really caught my eye this time.

QUESTION 1: I saw an article in the Jiu Jitsu Style web page that you will be answering any questions related to nutrition,

I just started to train BJJ and I weigh about 121 pounds and I'm 5'7". What should I do to gain some weight? What should I eat? How many times a day should I eat?

Thanks,
Francisco

Hi Francisco, that's a great question and one that a lot of grapplers ask when they start training.

The main thing that you need to address is calories. In order to gain weight you need to eat more calories of whole, nutritionally dense food. With that in mind you need to know how many calories you are currently eating on a daily basis. I would advise that you start keeping a food diary of everything you eat and drink over a weekly period. Then work out how many calories you are taking in on an average day.

You can now get free calorie counter apps for your phone such as MyFitness Pal and MyNetDiary that will help no end when it comes to recording this.

Then when you have an idea of how much you are taking in, I would recommend that you increase that amount by 10%. So if you are taking in 2500 calories a day, you would increase that to 2750. If you have not

gained any weight in a week's time, add another 10%. Don't go over a gain of about 1-3 pounds per month though as any more than that and you will most probably be gaining too much fat!

When it comes to what type of foods to add to your diet, it really is an individual matter as to who responds best to what type of macro nutrients (protein, fats or carbs). You will be able to gain a much better insight into this by reading my previous series on macronutrients.

QUESTION 2: I am just getting started in BJJ and I am looking for information on what additional supplements I can take to help with recovery, performance and most importantly joint protection/health. I am looking for specific dosages or specific multi-vitamins.

Thanks,
Charles

Hi there, without knowing anything about you, your training or your nutrition history I can't really give you specifics. I would recommend speaking to a coach who knows you and also reading my previous article on supplements.

However, I pretty much include all of these in most of my clients' plans:

- A good quality whey protein
- A multi vitamin

"I HAVE PLENTY OF CLIENTS WHO ARE VEGETARIAN, VEGAN AND PESCETARIAN. IT JUST REQUIRES YOU TO BE A BIT MORE SWITCHED ON ABOUT WHAT FOODS TO HAVE AND HOW TO COMBINE THEM."

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- Fish oil
- Vitamin D
- Creatine
- ZMA

These help you cover your bases and lead to good, all round health.

QUESTION 3: Are there any difference between animal proteins and plant proteins? Can athletes thrive on a plant based diet?

William

Hi William, thanks for the question! Yes there is a big difference between plant based proteins and animal proteins. The simple truth is that it is a lot harder to form complete proteins and get adequate amounts from plant proteins.

Notice that I said harder and not impossible.

I have plenty of clients who are vegetarian, vegan and pescetarian. It just requires you to be a bit more switched on about what foods to have and how to combine them. It also might mean that you need to pay more attention to your nutrition than your training partners to get the same results. Good luck!

QUESTION 4: I hear lots of talk about the Keto diet at the moment – is this a good diet to support a grappler?

It all depends on the person and their primary goal. Notice that I said their primary goal.

A lot of people want to start BJJ to help them get in shape. Others do it to help their MMA training, some because they just want a hobby and others want to be a world champion.

This is also a good opportunity to actually talk about true Keto - this means zero carbs for a prolonged period of time until your body starts to produce Ketones. This normally takes about 3-4 weeks for most individuals. Have a beer? Out of Ketosis. Some rice or a random slice of toast? Out of Ketosis.

So when most people are talking about Keto, they really mean low carb. But what is low carb is different for everyone.

You need to know what you want from BJJ and then eat to support that. It is true that some people do respond better to fewer carbs and I have some clients that follow a Keto approach. However, I would say that 90% of my clients have carbs in some form or another. This is simply because most athletes perform better with carbs.

Now the amount of carbs that each person takes in can vary greatly. Some have 600g a day while others have 50g. Everyone is different and you need to find your own sweet spot that will support your training and recovery. I will say that it is VERY rare for me to meet someone who doesn't perform better with some carbs in their diet.

These are all great questions that highlight the vast differences that people have in their lives that affect their nutritional approach. Remember that there is no perfect diet. The best plan is the one that fits your lifestyle, and that you can do consistently and that gives you results.

This is a regular column, so I am really looking forward to helping a bunch of you! If you have any questions then please send them to:

U2US@BJJSTYLE.COM

Stay healthy,

Mike

RECIPE: WEST AFRICAN STEW

Ingredients

- 1 big honkin' fully-cooked rotisserie chicken, hand torn or roughly chopped olive oil or Pam
- 1/4 cup diced onion (I buy mine pre-chopped and frozen)
- 1 tablespoon finely diced ginger (I get the minced jarred kind)
- 1 tablespoon of finely chopped jalapeno pepper (more if you're Texan)
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 cup of low-sodium chicken stock or broth
- 1/2 cup of natural peanut butter or nut butter of choice
- 2 tablespoons no-sugar-added tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar
- Pink sea salt and black pepper, to taste
- Green onions, chopped, as garnish (optional)

Directions

1. Add some olive oil or Pam to a big pan and toss in your onions. Add salt and pepper. Saute until translucent, then add jalapeno and ginger. Cook for a couple minutes, then add chili powder.
2. Add chicken stock, nut butter, tomato paste, and apple cider vinegar. Bring to boil, then decrease heat to simmer and toss in the chicken. Stir to combine and simmer for another 10 minutes or so.
3. Plate it up, garnish with green onion (scallions) if you want, then enjoy.

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ANDY MARSHALL

ANDY MARSHALL is the owner of *Villain Strength* and a strength and conditioning expert. He has worked with notable professional athletes including heavyweight boxing contender, Dillian Whyte, and British grappling standout, Dan Strauss.

FIT TO FIGHT | FIVE KILLER CONDITIONING DRILLS

Riding a stationary bike sucks. Sure, it's convenient and often the only option for a lot of people, but let's be honest; enduring 30 minutes of water boarding would probably be more fun. If you can ride a stationary bike, you can ride a real bike, and that would be a much better choice. Sprinting would be far superior to either of those. Doing so on a hill or with a sled or Prowler is often even better. Below are some of my favourite conditioning drills that I do myself and with all of my clients. All of these can be done at the end of your strength workouts as a finisher for 10-15 minutes. Most of them can also be done on off days; either alone or in a circuit with one or several of the other conditioning drills. If you choose that option you would train for 15-30 minutes and be sure to choose exercises that won't interfere with your next day's workout. Therefore you probably wouldn't want to do band sprints the night before a heavy squat day, for example.

BATTLING ROPES - There are several different ways to do the battling ropes- alternate, double arm waves, side to side, windmill style, with a squat or reverse lunge between reps, etc. Whatever ways haven't been done yet will be invented, tested and tried sometime in the near future; you can get creative with ropes. The benefit of this exercise is that it causes zero joint stress or soreness. This is huge! Because of this it can be done frequently and on days between heavy training sessions without fear of it interfering with your strength gains. This is also great for anyone with any kind of knee or other lower body injury.

PROWLER SPRINTS - I say Prowler sprints and not "pushes" because when we load the Prowler up heavy I consider that strength work or strength endurance. For conditioning I like to keep it a little lighter and do a large volume of work with minimal rest periods, or until the Prowler flu strikes and vomit appears.

SLED SPRINTS – These can be done forwards or backwards and with a belt attached to your waist or by grabbing the handles. Again, if you do these heavy, I consider it strength or strength endurance. For more of a gruelling conditioning workout I keep the sled light and recommend doing 40-100 metre sprints. If you have limited distance, as we do at the gym, just do more sets with less rest.

BAND RESISTED SPRINTS - This one is awesome if you have limited space. The lactic acid build up in the legs is enough to drop anyone to their knees after thirty seconds if it's their first time doing this. Use two to three bands (average or strong, depending on the weight and strength of the athlete) and keep constant tension while using short, choppy steps. Be sure to use spotters in front in case someone slips or you have any mishaps with the bands. Always resist on the eccentric portion and then fire out as quickly as possible when you return to the start position. If you are not used to these, start with 15 seconds per set and work your way up to 30 or even 60 seconds. Rest only long enough for the lactic acid to clear and for you to be able to perform the next set with good form.

FARMERS WALKS - This is one of those conditioning drills that can also be a great strength exercise as well. Load it up heavy and it will increase your grip strength and build an iron trunk and stability in your lower body like nothing else. In the process it will also improve your conditioning. That's one way to do it - heavy for short distances. Or you can go lighter on it and walk longer and further. You could bring a pair of 30-50kg dumbbells/kettlebells out to the field with you and walk 100 metres down and back with them. In between you could run sprints or push the Prowler and then grab the bells and go for another walk. You could also do two arm/two kettlebell swings and immediately at the end of the high rep set, walk as far as you can without dropping them. The options are limitless.

With all of these methods weather is never an excuse. If it's 30 degrees in July or 5 degrees in January, any of these can be done by anyone who actually has some balls and is willing to work. Get after it.

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REVIEW CORNER

KINGZ COMP 450 V4 WOMENS KIMONO

£99 VIA WWW.KINGZEUROPE.COM

Currently championed by the likes of Eduardo Telles, Jon Satava and the Ribeiro brothers, Kingz are really taking the jiu jitsu community by storm at the moment. The Comp 450 V4 is one of the best women's kimonos we've ever tested and it's available in white, blue, black and navy.

The pearl weave jacket is made from a single piece of 450gsm fabric, making it extremely durable and unlikely to rip. Kingz have further ensured durability by triple reinforcing the stitching on stress points. The prominent Kingz wording sits across both shoulders, and their gold crown logo looks stunning on our navy sample gi. The lower left section of the jacket also includes an awesome design featuring a dragon with a crown, giving the whole jacket a very regal feel!

After a month of testing, we noticed minor shrinkage with this product, mainly around the body area of the jacket. However, this is to be expected of most kimonos and that little bit of shrinkage brought the gi up to a perfect fit.

The trousers are made from heavy-duty 10oz cotton drill pants and feel like they're absolutely bombproof. The motto 'Heavy Lies the Crown' is incorporated onto a design on the right thigh, while two further Kingz logos are located on the upper and lower left leg – all in a beautiful gold colour.

The Comp 450 really is a beast of a kimono, and is quickly establishing itself as one of Kingz' flagship products. Sadly, there's still relatively little on the market in terms of gis cut specifically for women, so this is sure to be an instant hit. It's comfy, very durable and makes for an ideal all-round kimono to add into your rotation. The Women's Comp 450 is available in sizes F1 up to F5 and costs £99.99. This product is also available in a men's cut and will also set you back £99.99, which is a good price point for such a well-built gi.

GIANNI GRIPPO SINGLE LEG X-GUARD

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.DIGITSU.COM ON DEMAND FOR $24.99 OR $39.99 AS A DVD

In this series, black belt competitor Gianni Grippo runs through the main entry methods and sweeps available from the single leg X-guard - a position that is among the many specialist guards taught by Gianni's instructor, Marcelo Garcia. This instructional is aimed at those who are comfortable with their open guard. The techniques only show entries and sweeps from the single leg X-guard, they do not show the passes that follow. A couple of regular X-guard sweeps are thrown in at the end for good measure. Overall, an excellent short instructional from Gianni and Digitsu, ideal for intermediate to advanced players but beginners may want a more general introduction to the regular X-guard and a grounding in guard passing before tackling the single leg X.

The single leg X-guard (here on written as 'singleX') is a strong holding and sweeping position. It relies on the foot of your outer leg being placed firmly on the opponent's hip, while your other (inside) leg is placed firmly against the inner thigh of your opponent, a bit like reverse de La Riva foot placement. With your hips held high and your legs squeezed tight, it is very difficult for your opponent to pass, escape or pressure you. It is also a fairly straightforward matter of executing the basic sweep from this position, but it can also transition to the regular X-guard quite easily.

DVD Production and Contents

There are twenty chapters altogether which divide roughly into two main portions - how to get to single X and how to sweep from single.
Single Leg X Entry
Single Leg X Entry - RDLR
Single Leg X Entry - Spider Guard
X Entrance
Single Leg X Drill
Single Leg X To X-Guard Drill
Basic Sweep
Basic Sweep - 2
Overhead Sweep
Toe Hold
Waiter Sweep
Waiter Sweep To Leg Drag
Waiter Sweep To Back Take
Back Take Elevator Sweep
X-Guard Technical Stand Up
X-Guard Backwards Sweep
X-Guard Back Take Ankle Pick
X-Guard Pass Counter

Technique highlights and rolling practice

Gianni teaches each technique very well, offering a lot of spoken explanation of the small details that can make or break the success of the move.

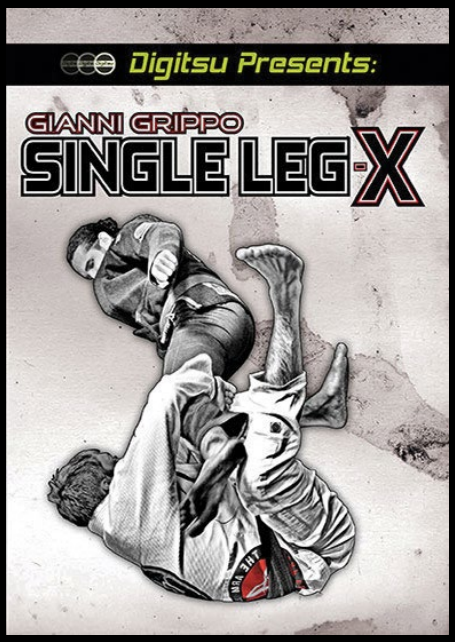
We found the singleX to be fairly straightforward to get into from a variety of guard positions - reverse DLR being a particular favourite and we also have had success with spider guard into singleX. For DLR fans, the singleX should be a natural to enter.

From the singleX position, we found the basic sweep to be incredibly easy to execute. We like the way Gianni adds a few extra details that make the sweep more dynamic. In addition to sweeps, there are also a few submissions available from the singleX, notably the toe hold and the straight ankle lock.

The last four or five chapters are regular X-guard based techniques. We assume these were added because the singleX itself transitions so smoothly to the regular x-guard that it was worth adding these to show the options available....either that or they just wanted to make it up to 90 minutes of instruction time. Regardless of why, it's a good way to see how easy it is to play with both positions. In fact the drill from singleX to regular X guard that Gianni shows in Chapter 6 is very useful.

Conclusions

Like many recent Digitsu videos, this set is short and sweet. It offers the viewer the chance to explore a singular position with a high level of detail without going overboard with thousands of hours of footage. 90 minutes and around 20 chapters is perfect to consume in bite sized chunks when viewed on your mobile or tablet while out and about. That being said, there isn't much discussion about why the singleX is such a great position, it simply assumes you want to learn it having already decided that it is a good thing to use (it is!) However, this set does not expand on passing techniques once you have completed the singleX sweep - Gianni leaves these open for you, the viewer, to choose how to progress from the sweep. Overall, a well made set of jiu jitsu techniques that are simple to apply at any level. Beginners might prefer to get more familiar with X-guard and guard passage prior to studying the singleX.



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As jiu jitsu fans, it's always fun to get your hands on new BJJ swag, right? The Grapplers Gift is a very cool company offering a range of gift packages that are perfect for birthdays and special occasions.

The aim of The Grapplers Gift is to provide high quality grappling related products - from clothing, hygiene, supplements, nutrition and general accessories – without the hassle of putting a bundle together yourself and shopping across multiple websites. You don't have to worry about accruing lots of delivery charges or wasting time shopping around on the internet. As well as selling their own range of branded apparel, the main emphasis of the website is based around their bundled gift sets:

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* Patches O'Toole postcard
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* Pure recharge smoothie
* Variety of stickers
* Meerkatsu art card

THE GRAPPLERS GIFT #2 £50

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* The Grapplers Gift mug
* The Grapplers Gift sticker
* The Grapplers Gift patch
* Whisky Wolf full soap bar
* Whisky Wolf patch
* Pure recharge smoothie
* Patches O'Toole postcard
* Patches O'Toole sticker
* Grips bag
* Variety of stickers
* Classic beanie from Rock the House Fightwear
* Meerkatsu art card
* Saviour Tea pouch

THE GRAPPLERS GIFT NOGI BOX £60

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* The Grapplers Gift shorts
* The Grapplers Gift t-shirt
* The Grapplers Gift water bottle

There are a number of other bundle packages to choose from, including a health and hygiene box, a little grappler box and you can even choose to customise your own gift box. All in all, this is a really great option for anyone struggling for gift ideas!

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GI SPOTLIGHT | TATAMI FIGHTWEAR ESTILO LEVE KIMONO

OVERVIEW

The "Leve" version of the regular Tatami Fightwear Estilo is the perfect mix of durability and comfort, while remaining lightweight. By using a unique "dual weave" construction, Tatami have managed to keep the Leve from stretching and losing shape, unlike other lightweight gis on the market.

JACKET

The jacket branding is pretty much a carbon copy of the regular Estilo 5.0, with the trademark Tatami Fightwear logos situated across both shoulders and on the lower back. There is also a small Estilo Leve logo located on the upper left chest section. One other area of detail worth noting is the cool washing instructions patch on the inside of the jacket and the Estilo branded lining around the inside of the neck section. These are awesome little subtleties you only notice when taking the gi off.

The jacket is constructed of two dual weave panels: a 450gsm top section and 350gsm main body section. This unique construction is what makes the Leve both light and extremely durable after hours of hard training. We found the jacket to be extremely soft to touch, comfy to wear and – like all Tatami Fightwear products – was the perfect fit straight out of the bag.

TROUSERS

Often lightweight kimonos come with ripstop cotton and – if we're being honest – we're not big fans of ripstop. The Leve however comes with 8oz twill cotton pants, which are unbelievably comfy, while remaining light. Interestingly the drawstring rope is secured by three belt loops not four, but it works perfectly well without having to keep readjusting.

DETAILS

We LOVE the new colourways that Tatami Fighwear has offered with the Leve. We tested the black kimono, which is offset with beautiful deep red logos and branding. Both the jacket and trousers feature red contrast stitching and it's just an all-round gorgeous product. The Leve also comes in white with offset red, and blue with offset gold.

SUMMARY

What more can you say about Tatami Fightwear products? Every new release offers not only fresh, new branding for you to salivate over, but they continue to push the boundaries in terms of kimono construction. The Leve is an absolutely amazing lightweight gi option, which manages to offer most of the benefits of Estilo Premier in terms of durability. At £95, this is a "go to" kimono for us.

AVAILABLE VIA TATAMIFIGHTWEAR.COM FOR £95

PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

ABU DHABI WORLD PRO 2016

The 2016 rendition of the Abu Dhabi World Pro saw the UAEJJ Federation raise the bar once again; showing the world what "professional" jiu jitsu is all about.

As always, fighters were flown in from all over the world to battle it out for over $500,000 of prize money, and there were plenty of upsets and rising stars making waves in the black belt divisions.

The UAEJJ Federation opted to mix the female brown and black belt brackets this year, which proved to be the catalyst for a number of surprises. No fewer than four former black belt world champions were defeated by brown belt opponents, with Alliance's Tayane Araujo claiming the highest profile scalp, Mackenzie Dern, on her way to open class gold. Though competing in the +70kg category, brown belt Araujo surprised onlookers by continually pulling guard during her matches, showcasing excellent technical ability and cementing her status as the woman to beat.

In the men's divisions, Erberth Santos was in electrifying form, eliminating Andre Galvao in the open class division (though eventually being eliminated) before beating Felipe Pena in the -94kg final. Santos' win was no doubt made all the more sweet considering his last minute loss to Pena at the IBJJF European championships earlier in the year.

With the notable late omission of Marcus "Buchecha" Almeida due to injury, it was Felipe Pena that stepped up to the plate and walked away with the open class belt plus $30,000 in prize money. The UAE-based Jose Junior faced-off against Pena in the final, coming off the back of some of the best performances of his life. However, Pena weathered an early storm before securing a submission victory and wrapping up what was another fantastic four days of action at the Abu Dhabi World Pro.

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / -62KG

First - *Hiago George Silva - PSLPB Cicero Costha*
Second - *Joao Miyao - PSLPB Cicero Costha*
Third - *Daniel Vieira Santana – UAEJJ Team Al Ain*

Right:
Marcio Andre
vs. Paulo Miyao
Bottom:
Roberto Satoshi
vs. Gabriel Arges

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / -69KG

First - *Marcio Andre - UAEJJ Team Abu Dhabi Island*
Second - *Paulo Miyao - PSLPB Cicero Costha*
Third- *Tiago Bravo - UAEJJ Team Al Ain*

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / -77KG

First - *Gabriel Arges – Gracie Barra*
Second - *Roberto Satoshi - Bon Sai Japan*
Third - *Jhonny Loureiro Souza - Alliance Mario Reis*

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / -85KG

First - *Leandro Lo - Brotherhood*
Second - *Claudio Calasans - Atos Jiu-Jitsu*
Third - *Renato Guimaraes Cardoso - Alliance Matriz (Sao Paulo)*

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / -94KG

First - *Erberth Santos Mesquita - Guigo Jiu Jitsu*
Second - *Felipe Pena – Gracie Barra*
Third - *Faisal Al Ketbi - UAEJJ National Team*

Above:
Leandro Lo vs
Claudio Calasans
Left: Felipe Pena
vs Erberth Santos
Below:
Ricardo Evangelista
vs Victor Silva

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / +94KG

First - *Ricardo Evangelista - Commando Group BJJ*
Second - *Victor Hugo Silva – GFTeam*
Third - *Andre Alberto Campos - UAEJJ Team – Al Ain*

BLACK / ADULT / MALE / OPEN CLASS

First - *Felipe Pena - Gracie Barra*
Second - *Jose Junior - UAEJJ Team – Training Hall*
Third - *Alexander Trans - GFTeam*

BROWN/BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / -55KG

First - *Mackenzie Dern - Gracie Humaita*
Second - *Marina Ribeiro - UAEJJ Team – Abu Dhabi Training Center*
Third - *Ariadne De Oliveira - UAEJJ Team Al Ain*

BROWN/BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / -62KG

First - *Beatriz Mesquita - Gracie Humaita*
Second - *Bianca Barbosa Basilio - Ryan Gracie (Jaroslav Neoral)*
Third - *Nadia Maria Melo - UAEJJ Team – Abu Dhabi Island*

Top:
Felipe Pena
vs Jose Junior
Middle:
Mackenzie Dern
vs Marina Ribeiro
Left:
Beatriz Mesquita
vs Bianca Basilio

BROWN/BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / -70KG

First - *Nathiely Melo Jesus - PSLPB Cicero Costha*
Second - *Priscila Cardoso Cerqueira - UAEJJ Team – Training Hall*
Third - *Yacinta Nguyen Huu - Brazilian Top Team (Canada)*

BROWN/BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / +70KG

First - *Tayane Porfirio Araujo - Alliance Matriz (Sao Paulo)*
Second - *Fernanda Mazzelli - Striker JJ I*
Third - *Tammy Griego - Gracie Barra*

Top:
Nathiely Jesus
vs Priscila Cerqueira
Middle:
Tayane Araujo
vs Fernanda Mazzelli
Bottom:
Tayane Araujo
vs Beatriz Mesquita

BROWN/BLACK / ADULT / FEMALE / OPEN CLASS

First - *Tayane Porfirio Araujo - Alliance Matriz (Sao Paulo)*
Second - *Beatriz Mesquita - Gracie Humaita*
Third - *Jessica Cristina Santos - UAEJJ Team – Abu Dhabi Training Center*

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PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

POLARIS PRO 3

Polaris Pro pretty much broke the internet after announcing their headline matchup featuring Rousimar Palhares and Garry Tonon for their third show in Poole, England.

Grappling fans were left hotly anticipating a true David vs Goliath encounter between two of the best leg lock connoisseurs in the business. Main event aside, Polaris Pro 3 included some truly intriguing matchmaking and shaped-up as one of the most exciting and talked about submission only cards we've ever seen.

Despite the lack of actual submissions on the main card, there was plenty of high-octane jiu jitsu on display. For us, the standout matches were as expected, with AJ Agazarm and Jake Shields putting on real show for the fans in attendance. Tempers flared, faces were slapped, words were said, and all in all it was just amazing entertainment! The evening was concluded with Garry Tonon showing just how tough of a competitor he really is after an astonishing performance against his much larger opponent, Palhares. Despite being on the receiving end of some huge slams and throws, Tonon perhaps got the better of the grappling exchanges, and he even ended up on his opponent's back in the latter stages of the bout.

Polaris Pro 3 was yet another amazing night for jiu jitsu fans, and the promotion is working extremely hard to take professional jiu jitsu to the next level. With whispers of Polaris Pro 4 matchups already being announced, we can't wait to see what's in store next.

Above:
Greg Creel
vs Vinicius De Castro
Bottom:
Micah Atkinson
vs Alain Pozzo

PRELIMINARY CARD

ALAIN POZO VS MICAH ATKINSON (NOGI) – POZO WINS VIA HEEL HOOK
VINICIUS DE CASTRO VS GREG CREEL (GI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW
KEITH MCKENZIE VS JEFF LAWSON (GI) – MCKENZIE WINS VIA REAR NAKED CHOKE
ADAM ADSHEAD VS PHIL HARRIS (NOGI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW
TRAVIS NEWAZA VS BEN DYSON (NOGI) – DYSON WINS VIA KIMURA

Top:
Adam Adshead
vs Phil Harris
Far Left:
Jeff Lawson
vs Keith McKenzie
Left: Ben Dyson
vs Travis Newaza

JOAO MIYAO VS YUKINORI SASA (GI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

This was an intriguing match on paper, as we were excited to see how Sasa, one of Japan's most prolific jiu jitsu athletes, would fair against the seasoned Miyao. The match started at a relatively slow pace, with both fighters searching for their rhythm. After a few minutes of inactivity, Joao took the initiative and came up into a passing position, where he showed fans a side of his game rarely seen. After finally grinding through Sasa's guard, the Brazilian came close with a lapel choke from the top position, as well as almost securing the finish from his opponent's back. Sasa did show tremendous heart and determination to avoid the submission and the match ended in a draw.

Above: Joao Miyao vs Yukinori Sasa
Below: Geo Martinez vs Luiz Tosta

GEO MARTINEZ VS LUIZ TOSTA (NOGI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

London Shootfighter representative, Luiz Tosta, took this match on at extremely short notice, knowing he was going to have his work cut out for him in this encounter. His opponent, Geo Martinez, is 10th Planet Jiu Jitsu's shining star and has been on breathtaking form over the past 18 months.

The fight started with Martinez aggressively hunting for leg locks off his back, pushing forward and engaging at every opportunity. With his opponent working at such a high pace, Tosta did extremely well to stay away from any danger, defending leg locks and avoiding bad positions relatively easily. As the match progressed, Tosta continued to show great resilience and solid defensive jiu jitsu, while Martinez struggled to mount any dangerous attacks. The fight ended with Martinez looking notably frustrated, having pushed forward during the whole fight without being able to penetrate Tosta's effective, yet tentative game.

DARRAGH O CONAILL VS JON SATAVA (GI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

Our first reactions after this match was concluded were "Jon Satava is a BEAST, and Darragh O Conaill has some serious heart". Marcelo Garcia black belt, Satava, looked absolutely jacked, and his aggressive passing was just beautiful to watch. O Conaill was forced to spend most of the fight attempting to recover his guard, but the immense pressure of his opponent made that close to impossible.

Testament to O Conaill's character, he never really looked in danger of being submitted, and after a passage of being positionally dominated by his opponent, he did managed to make it to his feet and hit a beautiful takedown. The Irishman spent the last minutes of the match working from the top position, hunting for a leg lock before the clock ran out.

BRUNO FRAZATTO VS GIANNI GRIPPO (GI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

This was a contest between the guardieros, with Grippo facing-off against one of his favourite athletes as a youngster. It was Frazatto that came close to securing an early advantage in the match after almost making it around Grippo's guard, but the American managed to fortify his position.

This was a very technical match with plenty of subtleties that you come to expect from top-level guard players. Both athletes were battling for the smallest of positional advantages and though there weren't really any solid submission attempts, it was great to watch two of the best featherweights, operating at opposite ends of their career, battle it out.

GEZARY MATUDA VS LAURENCE FOUILLAT (GI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

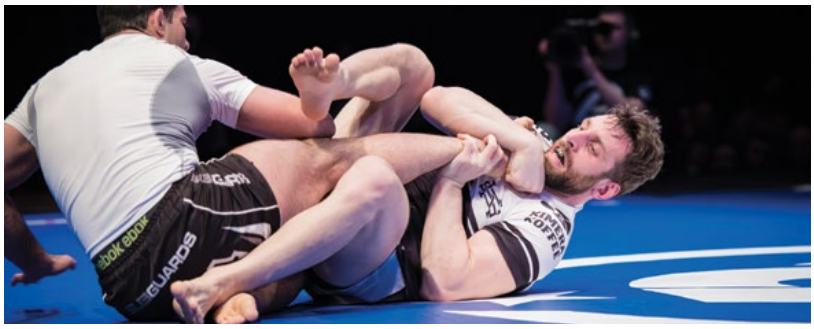
Coming off the back of her highlight reel armbar submission over Michelle Nicolini at Polaris Pro 2, Gezary Matuda returned to the UK to face one of Europe's best black belts, Laurence Fouillat. The match got underway with Matuda pushing a high pace, but there was to be no quick submission win for her this time around. Fouillat spent most of this match battling for position, but often found herself under threat of being submitted. However, Matuda was unable to make the most of her dominant positions and the fight went to a draw.

Top:
Jon Satava
vs Darragh O Conaill
Far left:
Gezary Matuda
vs Laurence Fouillat
Left:
Gianni Grippo
vs Bruno Frazatto

AUGUSTO "TANQUINHO" MENDES VS EDDIE CUMMINGS (NOGI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

This was a rematch from 2015 ADCC that Eddie Cummings was desperate to make happen. Having lost to Tanquinho by a solitary penalty in Brazil, Cummings was keen to show that he could dominate under submission only rules.

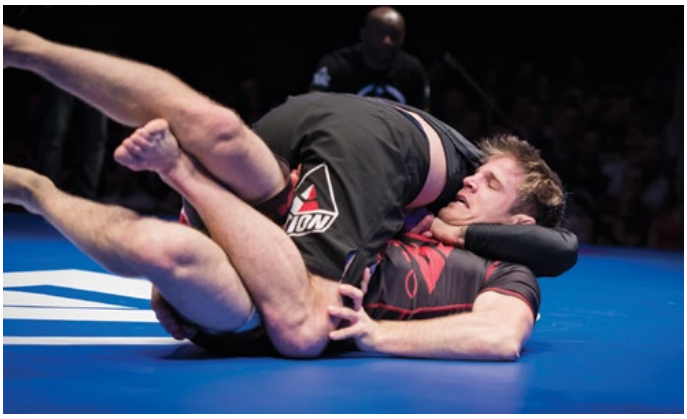
As expected, it was Cummings who pulled guard straight away and looked to attack with his patented leg locks. Just like their encounter at the ADCC, Tanquinho did a great job of avoiding any danger and never looked troubled by the efforts of his opponent. As the match progressed, neither fighter seemed to have a 'plan B', with Cummings insistent on reaching a leg lock position, while Tanquinho was forced to defend. Though the Brazilian did come close to securing side control, Cummings was rescued by his flexibility and the match went to a draw.

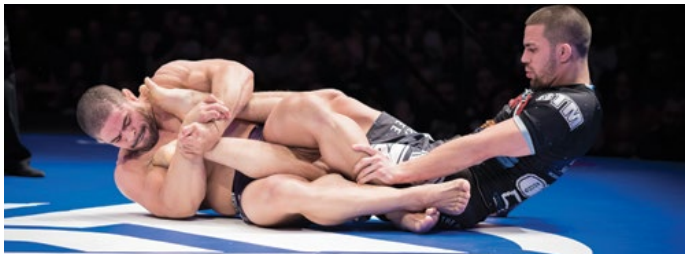


AJ AGAZARM VS JAKE SHIELDS (NOGI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

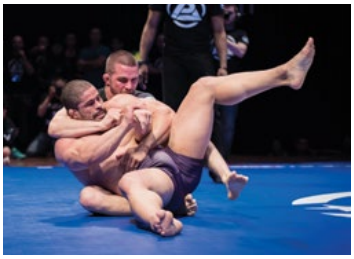
This bout turned out to be one more fitting for the WWE arena than a jiu jitsu mat. After plenty of trash talk in the build-up, both fighters were clearly charged with emotion as the referee started proceedings – and they did not disappoint. Shields quickly took the initiative after beautifully countering a takedown attempt into a mounted guillotine. As Polaris Pro fans will know, AJ Agazarm seems destined to never tap, and though he spent a huge percentage of the match defending horrible pressure and choke attacks, he never looked like being submitted. Even a late armbar, which looked 'on' to everyone watching, was escaped relatively easily by AJ.

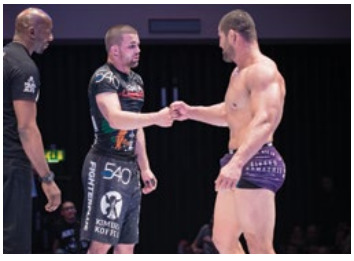
Sadly, emotions did boil over both during and after the match, with AJ being accused of fish-hooking and Shields 'Stockton slapping' his opponent on a number of occasions. Shields' post fight interview was 'colourful', and was followed by a small melee between the athletes and coaches. Though it got a little silly towards the end, we can't deny this was entertainment at its best!





Top:
Eddie Cummings
vs Augusto Mendes
Left:
AJ Agazarm
vs Jake Shields
Below:
Garry Tonon
vs Rousimar Palhares





ROUSIMAR PALHARES VS GARRY TONON (NOGI) – FIGHT TO A DRAW

The main event of the evening had the whole crowed pumped-up, and they were in full voice as the athletes took to the stage. The sheer size of Palhares as he removed his top resulted in an audible gasp from the onlookers – this guy is just insanely big!

The match did not disappoint, with both fighters coming close via what looked like tight heel hooks. Though points obviously counted for nothing, Palhares did pull of a couple of amazing throws, with Tonon catching some serious hang-time before crashing to the mat. As the match progressed and Palhares clearly started to tire, Tonon kept pushing the pace and reached a number of dominant positions, including back control.

As the fight came to a close, the crowd were on their feet, and both athletes embraced in a great show of sportsmanship that was definitely needed after the previous match. For Tonon, he'd solidified his status as one of the best submission only fighters in the world. For Palhares, he'd won the respect of the fans and showed that he's not such a bad guy after all.

MAT LIFE

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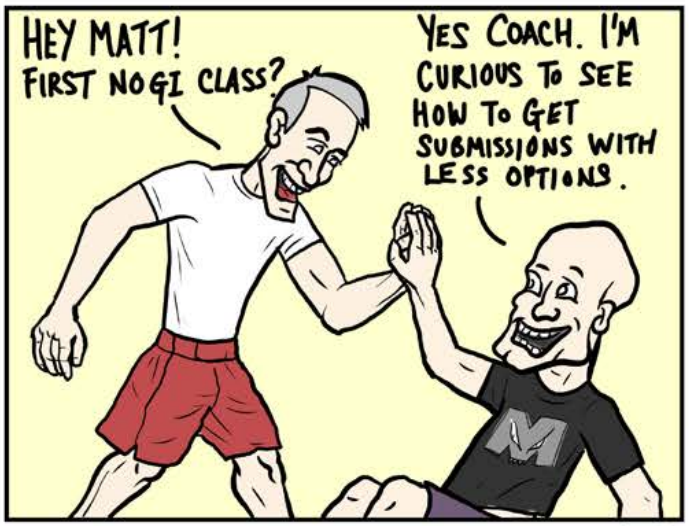
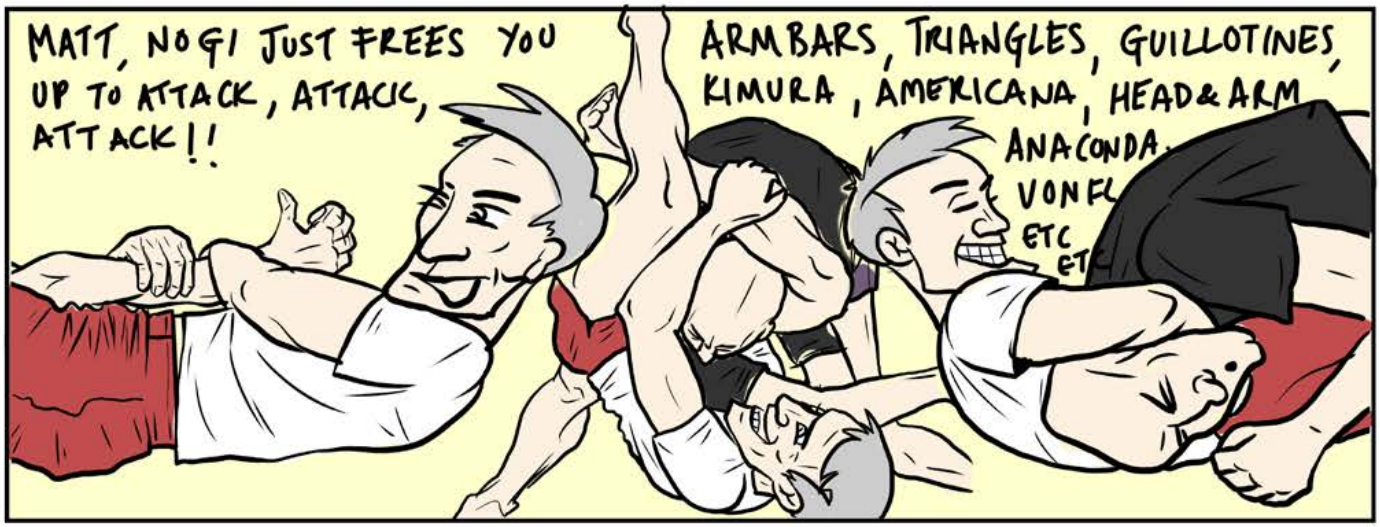
THE ADVENTURES OF A BJJ NOOB

By Meerkatsu





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